The Midnight Cry

A Novel

By Jane Marsh Parker

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THE MIDNIGHT CRY

A NOVEL

BY

JANE MARSH PARKER

AUTHOR OF "ROCHESTER—A STORY HISTORICAL."

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THE MIDNIGHT CRY.

CHAPTER I.

PRISCILLA OTTOWAY.

SOME fifty years ago the traveller through the Genesee Valley—and there were many seeking farms on its fertile flats in those days—might have seen from the highland stage road between Canawagas and Mount Morris, in the wide lowland stretching far to the westward, a big stone chimney and the broad gable of a house, which, as one caught a glimpse of them through the hoary old pine trees, showed in striking contrast with the homes of the most prosperous farmers, even those who had been among the first to take up land on "the Phelps and Gorham Purchase." There was little to be seen of the house beside the great chimney, but the well cleared acres surrounding it—the stumpless meadows and cultivated fields—the winding avenue of elms, and the great barns,

were sure to awaken the curiosity of the traveller. The big chimney looked discontented and misanthropic, as if conscious that its wide throat had been made for naught as far as hospitality went, when its visible link with the world was nothing but that slender thread of a path, scarcely discernible to a tramping peddler—a foot-path opening upon an obscure cross road, while the gate—well padlocked—was a half mile from the highway, and fully that distance from the longest stretch of its afternoon shadow. Nor was the curiosity of the stranger lessened by the warning posted up conspicuously, in full sight of the highway—"Trespassers must look out for the dogs."

"You're right, stranger," Jerry Burns, the old Valley stage driver was pretty sure to be saying to some one among his passengers when that sullen looking chimney came in sight—"it is about as lunsum a house as you'll see in these parts. Queer place for buildin'—but queer kinder folks lives over there, as nigh as folks as don't know 'em, and nobody does, can find out.

"Barley Flats is the name it goes by—and they don't raise a ter'bul sight of barley nuther

——No, I was never over thar and never expecter be—not while them big dogs are runnin' on the place—English mastiffs—a half dozen nur more. Yis, it's stun—cobble stun—and was built by a Tory refergee not two years after Sullivan went through here and whipped the red-skins, whipped 'em so they stayed whipped. The man who built that house bought his land of the Injuns—but how he put up such a buildin' in those times is hard tellin'. Some say the old feller meant to set himself up as a kinder big baron out here and have things his own way with the Injuns and the British to help him. He hadn't a living soul for company but a half dozen slaves, men and wimin and two or three Mohawk boys. He'd some trouble in the Old Country—killed somebody most likely, or some girl most killed him—it's all the same 'bout—and he meant to live here in the woods and have it out with his niggers and Mohawks, when something took him back to England and there he died. Such a house full of old picturs and odds and ends of queer things you never see. He must have bought out no end of vandues, for I've hearn tell that there's piles of old chiny and Dutch

dressers, and humbly old chairs, and a lot of portraits—nobody knows the names of. The English heirs had a heap of trouble in getting the title fixed up square. The Injuns had no right to sell the land, you know, but that was settled with the State somehow—and after the old house had stood empty for years an Englishman came and took possession, and had hardly got settled, and his two old maid sisters had just arrived, when he died of Genesee fever, and there was them two lorn women all alone in a strange land, savin' a nurse that had been sent up from Rochester by one of the doctors there. The same woman, if you'll believe, who is livin' there to-day. That's John Wilson's grave—that white fence there in the medder. His sisters went back to England after most crying their eyes out, and Priscilla Ottoway, that's her name, stayed on the place, and whether she rents it or has bought it or if they gave it to her out an nout nobody knows, but there she stays—and if that house was an island in the Pacific Ocean it wouldn't be more shet off from the world.

"Yes, sunthin of a family. Sech as she has picked up since the Wilsons went away—two or

three darkies, runaway niggers most likely—for she takes Garrison's *Liberator*—and a flax headed boy. I remember the night she come up in the stage with that baby in her arms, and the old darkie she was mighty careful shouldn't open his head to nobody.

"What does she look like?" At this point Jerry would express his sense of the inadequacy of words by a long drawn sigh—"Well, stranger, mebbe you're used to seein' handsomer women, but I ain't. She never goes to meetin', nor attends preachin', and she has no more to do with folks around here than if they were Hottentots. There's no use in a preacher tryin' to get over there to labor for her soul, and to get her to pay suthin' for the gospel in these parts, for there's those big dogs and it's no use tryin' to talk with her when she's off her own groun'. She turns yer over to that darkie and he's mummer than death. No, she don't hire much extra help. There's a couple of Scotch boys and their mother livin' on the place, but they don't know much more'n the rest on us. She works in the hay field herself sometimes—in fact there's little she can't do, I guess. No, she isn't a young woman, but gray hair somehow

don't make her look old. Ever hear of the big camp meetings we have out here? No?—well she owns the camp ground, the prettiest grove in the Genesee Valley, but she lets us have it only on condition that no one goes near the old stun house, and we've never once seen her or any of the rest of 'em on the groun'. The postmaster says she don't get no letters, only once a year or so, and then one comes from England, but she takes a heap of newspapers, and I've seen Garrison's *Liberator* myself with her name on the wrapper. I'd advise you not to try it, stranger. I've seen those dogs myself."

The story of the old house and its occupants, as told by Jerry Burns, was in the main true, but the gossips never dreamed that the sisters of John Wilson, the prim old English ladies who spent a melancholy summer in severe seclusion at Barley Flats, knew no more about Priscilla Ottoway themselves than they did. Often in their lonely tea drinkings before the parlor window, from which they could see the grave in the meadow, they had betrayed to each other their uneasiness as to the antecedents of the capable woman so providentially sent to them in their extremity, who made no response when

they softly prattled their appreciation of her rare merits. They had urged her to go back to England with them, but she had declined so positively they had not courage to ask her a second time. She wished to become the owner of Barley Flats, she had said. She could pay for the property in time, and they had been pleased to let her have it upon easy terms, so loath were they to leave John's grave in the care of strangers.

"Please keep it always as much like a bit of old England as you can. We will send flower seeds from our own garden, daffodils, orchis, lady's smock, blue bells," and Miss Abby kept count on her shadowy fingers.

"The springs here are late—so very late—and to think of the winters in this desolate spot." She shut her lids down close and shuddered. "What will you do, Ottoway, when the snow piles up in high drifts between you and the road?"

"Sit by the fire and spin."

The sisters looked at each other in hopeless bewilderment. Then Miss Abby said with less warmth:

"You must have a care for the ivy. I shall

send you a root from the church-yard at home, Ottoway. We shall write to you, ourselves, at least once a year, and you must tell us how the place looks—the grave I mean—"

"Certainly," turning around and around a cap which she was fluting, and seemingly absorbed in it.

There was a long pause, in which the sisters exchanged timid glances, each wishing the other would be more courageous for once, or this attempt to draw Ottoway out in conversation would prove as futile as preceding ones.

"I am sometimes afraid you will regret taking the place," ventured Miss Rachel at last. "In that case—" and she paused.

"Whatever comes, I shall stay here as long as I live," was the low measured response. "I am my own master," and Ottoway serenely proceeded to array Miss Abby in the freshly fluted cap—carefully bowing the wide snowy strings as if nothing else in the world were worth consideration—and leading the old lady before the mirror to pronounce upon the effect. "Will you have the other made like this?"

For once Miss Abby surprised her waiting woman, for instead of commenting upon the

exquisite workmanship of her head-gear she turned from the mirror abruptly, and clutched nervously at Ottoway's arm.

"But how are we to address your letters? Is it Miss Ottoway—or Mrs. Ottoway?"

A faint smile softened Priscilla Ottoway's firm mouth.

"Address me as Priscilla Ottoway. That is all sufficient. Will Miss Rachel have her cap made up like this one?" seemingly unconscious that caps were as far from the mind of Miss Rachel as they ever could be, and that the sisters were doubting if they might with propriety leave John's grave in her charge.

Their failure to learn more from Doctor Elwood, who had provided them with their most capable nurse, quite disheartened them. Miss Abby wrote to him the next day—couching her enquiries in a style of suggestive allusion that made it rather hard for the doctor to decide whether Miss Abby looked upon her "highly esteemed servant" as saint or adventuress.

"I know nothing about her," he wrote—"only that she is the best nurse I ever knew, and a superior woman in every way. She came

to Rochester in charge of the sick wife of an English gentleman. She had offered her services to him on the packet boat. After the death of her patient, she proved invaluable to me as a thoroughly competent nurse. That there is a mystery about her I admit, yet I believe she is a woman whose history if known would increase our respect. I feel your difficulty in asking her if she were married or single. A question so easily asked in most cases is not easily asked of her. I could have told you that it would not be answered."

"There is this comfort about it, Rachel," faltered Miss Abby, when Ottoway had bidden them farewell in the ship's cabin—"John's grave is just as safe as if we knew all about her. If he were alive, dear—then it would be very different, you know—very different—"

CHAPTER II.

THE PROMISED LAND.

LET me help you to see her as she was when she used to sit in the east porch of the old stone house, those summer days when Jerry Burns was telling every thing he knew about her to the travellers by the Valley stage.

Climbing the padlocked gate on the cross road, we follow the lane through the clover meadow. Letting down the heavy bars, we rest if we will at the seat beneath the oak, where the grass is worn away, and find a book or two in the niche provided for them—Spenser or Shakespeare, Buffon's Natural History, or possibly a treatise upon the diseases of horses. Still another pair of bars, a brook gurgling through irregular patches of mint, trees newly planted, and nearer the house where the lawn is like velvet, belts and patches of flowers. Great dogs are dozing or gamboling in the sun, a man's voice is heard singing in the big barn,

a parrot calls from the porch, a gigantic negress in gorgeous head-gear is moving about the open kitchen door, and there in the wide porch—the fairest of landscapes framed in the roses over-hanging it — sits the woman we seek. A family of kittens frisk about her, the old cat dozes at her feet, an open book is in her lap, her knitting in her hands. She is looking across the fields with clear, penetrating vision—a reposeful eye undimmed by tearful revery, a satisfied face—its striking characteristic perhaps its absence of expectancy—and yet unlike most faces revealing that lack; it is hopeful rather than sad. A low, wide forehead, imperious chin and mouth, full lips and large ivory, not porcelain, teeth. Her hair is snowy white, and soft as spun silk; its mist of short ringlets surmounted by a matronly cap of yellow lace, the scarflike ends of which are pinned across her breast with an antique brooch of pearl. She might pass for thirty-five, but for her white hair and matronly cap. There is a healthful glow in her clear olive complexion, and the sharp click of her needles tells how little she is affected by the enervating heat of the breathless day. Her hands are a trifle large and brown

with exposure, but the tapering finger-tips show a dainty and accurate touch. Her fingers are ringless, but that signifies little to the curious at a time when many a wife and mother had no hoop of gold. She wears a gown of India muslin, the full flowing sleeves revealing her rounded arms, and sturdy, supple wrists. A housewife's apron of brown brocade, the big pockets somewhat overladen, lends a picturesqueness to her costume. A woman above the medium height, one whose face and form would furnish the model for Boadicea driving her chariot to the front of the battle — that is Priscilla Ottoway of the old stone house in the Genesee Valley.

The gossips were right: the two blacks were runaway slaves. On her way home from New York she had fallen in with old Merit. Having left the line boat, to walk across a section of country around which the Erie canal wound tortuously, she had heard his pitiful prayer from the thicket where he had crawled to wait for the Lord's deliverance: "Ole Mas'r up dere in glory will tell ye I'se jis' as much 'count as old 'Lijah. Didn't yer say you'd nebber let yo' people die in de wilderness, and ain't I gwine ter die right heah

in de bushes if de ravens don't bring caun and bacon right smart 'long?"

"I know'd he'd drive his cha'yot wheels dis way," he said, following Priscilla Ottoway to the boat, where he managed to keep his promise to tell nothing about himself and to feign deafness marvellously well.

"The white-headed boy," one of the results of this same journey, she had taken home with far more misgivings. The November rain had carried away a bridge the Valley stage reached late in the night. Priscilla Ottoway and Merit were the only passengers. At the cabin where they found shelter a baby was born that night, the mother's life going out with its feeble wail. The young father, who had been alone but for their arrival, had begged her to take his motherless child, and she had sat waiting for the day, unable to say yea or nay, when the black man broke in:

"I wish my ole Meriky was heah. She'd nebber gib up dat baby. De Lawd isn't gwine ter send moah angels 'long dis road in a hurry. S'pose now, Miss Prissy, de Lawd laid dat baby cross your lap for nothun? Mistis"—and he spoke with sharp abruptness—"it come to me

all of a sudd'n, or I wouldn't speak up so peart. I'se been heahing my Meriky. She says, 'Take dat baby. I'se comin' Norf to be its black mammy. I'se gwine ter hab one baby dey can't sell.'"

"Hush, Merit."

He curled down before the fire, and she told him to light his pipe. Stuffing the tobacco into the bowl, he broke out again:

"'Pears like I heah her say, 'I'se comin' Norf to hab one baby dey can't sell.'"

The end of it all was Priscilla Ottoway took the child for her own.

"Mary used to say," sobbed the father, "that if it were a boy she should call it Philander. You see it was at a husking bee she first saw me and I was singing 'Come, Philander, let us be a marchin'.' I wish you'd call him Philander, that's all I'll ask, and be good to him for Mary's sake."

True enough, before April of that next year America had become one of the household at Barley Flats. When Priscilla Ottoway had helped old Merit off in the disguise of a deaf old *valet* whose master had sent him back to Kentucky with the necessary passports, she

never expected to see him again, never in the world. But one stormy night, as she sat with the baby, the dogs became strangely excited, and when she opened the door there stood old Merit, a tall, broad-shouldered negress close behind him, who paid little heed to welcome or greeting, but strode directly to the cradle and silently studied the baby's face. Her stature not only belittled Merit, watching her nervously, but the room and everything in it. She looked as if hesitating about remaining, then she pushed him back from the cradle with grumpy impatience, and taking up the child, sat down with it before the fire.

"Yis, mistis, we'se cum a long way, and dis baby was all dat fotched me. I reckon dey'll nebber find us——" settling back comfortably with the baby on her shoulder. "Merit knowed bettah dan tell me 'twas so fah. I'se right smart tuckered out totin' him along."

Priscilla Ottoway had barred her gates against the world. Barley Flats was a world of itself, and within its borders for her at least there was peace, something she believed the world outside could never give her more. The blacks had their domestic broils, 'twas true, but they were

devoted to her, and as happy as their temperament permitted. The place changed wondrously under the five years of her superintendence. Every nook and corner was made to yield its full measure of use and beauty. She had created a new world out of an old—not only in the farm but in her own life—a patient creation, the evolution of vigilant industry and singleness of purpose. Everything should yield its best. John Wilson's grave was a blaze of glory from spring to fall. Baby Phil had grown with everything else—blossom he never would—the silent, reserved, unattractive child, submissive to a fault unless opposed. He was the constant companion of his black "daddy," whose education of the lad had one severe limitation —he was never to teach him anything of God or the Unseen. A painful restriction this to pious old Merit, but Priscilla Ottoway would have separated them entirely rather than that the child's mind should be poisoned, as she held, by superstitious fancies. He would find the truth in due time, or like herself he would be content in the denial of such discovery.

"I can teach him only what I know myself, and what do I know of things unseen? The

desire to understand His silence shall not tempt me into querulous altercation with the Unknowable. If He has personality, if He is my Father, he is something more than mere physical processes of Nature, than law. That fact, if such it is, is yet to be revealed to me. If I am blind, born blind, and He will not open mine eyes, shall I rebel? And will He condemn my failure to find what I have bruised myself in the seeking? I shall teach Phil nothing that is mere speculation, superstition. Better nothing to hold by than a rope of sand."

She taught him to read, and he was an apt scholar, but nature was the book he liked best, and the black man was his favorite teacher. Merit's disappointment was in the boy's hopeless dissimilarity to "Mars Sam" of the old Kentucky plantation. It was pathetic to see the black man trying to develop a love of mischief in the solemn little fellow, by telling him the mad pranks of the lad, he was proud to declare, was still his master and owner, and for whom his heart never ceased yearning.

CHAPTER III.

NAN.

PRISCILLA OTTOWAY had gone to New York believing that when the "Busy Bee" had sailed she could go back to Barley Flats, and be as lost to the world as it was her desire to be. But an outcome of that journey had been a link with the world and the past she sometimes feared might open her door to an unwelcome guest—one she could not dismiss.

While waiting for the boat that was to take her homeward, she could not resist taking a stroll in the city, the streets of which were plainly familiar to her. She was closely veiled, and any one observing her movements would have discovered that the object of her walk was reached when she came to a discouraged looking dwelling on a cross street near lower Broadway, a house seemingly overawed by its newer and finer neighbors. Nothing about

the house escaped the guarded look she gave it: the dingy curtains, broken shutters, the pitcher with a broken nose on the upper window ledge, and the name Ottoway on the unpolished door plate. She was hurrying on with quickened pace, and had unconsciously lifted her veil, when a wan faced girl flitted like a moth around the corner and in another instant was clinging to her skirts.

"Oh, Aunt Prissy! We thought you were dead!"

There was no eluding the child, no deceiving her.

"Hush, Nan," and together they sat down upon a seat in a neighboring park. "And your father is still living? Promise me you will say nothing of this meeting. There, goodbye. Be a good girl, Nan—let me go—goodbye, dear."

But no, the girl held her fast. She was an odd figure in her tawdry fine hat, a silk shawl trailing behind her, her kid slippers held on by dexterous shuffling. Her big blue eyes, as she stood with a tight grip upon Priscilla Ottoway, suggested a wax doll transfixed with amazement.

"There now, let me go, Nanny."

"I am going with you," with despairing uncertainty. Then imploringly, "Come home and see papa."

"No, Nanny, that cannot be— Mind, you must not tell him, nor your mother, that you have seen me."

"He had a letter only the other day." She seemed to be testing the reality of things by slow speech. "I read it to him. Señor Almeyda is dead. He died in a prison in Lisbon."

"Ah—" the hard lines deepening around her mouth.

"The letter wanted to know if you had ever come back. Señor Almeyda left some money, and they wrote to papa about it. I'll go and get the letter if you will only wait."

"No, Nanny, no—" with imperious decision—"I am dead." The girl turned pale and relaxed her hold. Priscilla Ottoway stepped beyond her reach and was turning away when with a faint wail the arms were outstretched imploringly—

"Only tell me one thing, Aunt Prissy. How may I find you some time when papa is dead and there is nobody in the world?"

"Hush, Nanny," concealing her from passers-by, "your step-mother will make a home for you."

"But she does not love me," her hold tighter than before, "and papa, oh he is so very ill."

Priscilla Ottoway had never been able to account for doing what she did before that painful interview was ended. She wrote upon a slip of paper the name and address of Dr. Elwood and gave it to the child who hid it in her bosom promising repeatedly never to reveal the meeting, nor to make use of the address in finding her aunt unless there were no one else in the world to befriend her.

"If you should ever receive a letter asking about me," Priscilla Ottoway had written to Dr. Elwood, "you will please not answer it without my consent and advice."

He had promised. Among the yesterdays inexorably banished, that one would have a hearing oftener than most others. Only for that slip of paper how perfect her separation from her old life!

"'Pears like somefin's gwine fur ter 'appen," Merit was growling to himself one afternoon as

he jogged over the road from the post-office, with a letter for Priscilla Ottoway; a letter which had lain in the office nearly a fort-night, as the postmaster said. "I'se been 'lowin dat de Lawd was doin' widout Miss Prissy's help dis long time now. He hasn't been troublin' her much all dese yeahs. If I'se not mistooken somfin's comin."

Nanny Ottoway was coming to Barley Flats on the morrow.

It was too late to prevent what would surely have been prevented had Priscilla Ottoway received the letter in due season. Midnight found her sitting alone before the smouldering hearth log. Why was she so unwilling to open her door to her own brother's child?

She brought from the antique cabinet in the dusky corner, an odor of India boxes filling the room with the creaking of the unused hinges, a miniature on ivory, the face of her mother, a fair young Quakeress in snowy cap, —a strong face, like and yet unlike her own—a serious face, bewitching for the demure coquetry in the dove-like yet resolute eyes.

She replenished her dying fire and studied the miniature, remembering how uncommon it

was for a Friend to have a miniature painted. When had a Hallowell committed such sin before? Then she remembered that this picture of her mother was painted when the worldly doings of the Friends of Philadelphia were harrowing the souls of the elect. Ruth Hallowell had gone up from Happy Valley to visit her mother's kindred in the great wicked city, and her kindred were rulers in the world of fashion. Had not Aunt Priscilla Hallowell given Ruth a white satin petticoat quilted with flowers and lined with cream colored Persian silk, which she had worn to the fine dinner party at which she met the young Oxonian, Reginald Ottoway, the enthusiastic missionary sent to Pennsylvania by Mother Church to help subdue the heresy of George Fox in the stronghold of Quakerism? They had loved each other, her father and her mother. And looking at the miniature she recalled the old story, and the opposition that pretty Quakeress had defied, even the revelations of her stern mother with the gift of tongues; visions that alas were true prophecies of an unhappy marriage. Musing over the miniature she was back in Happy Valley again—the Friends' settlement among the mountains

of Pennsylvania—lost behind the high hills shutting in the broad brimmed roofs, under which lived the descendants of martyrs whose rigid orthodoxy and separation from the world had been rewarded by an abundance of this world's goods, and whose great stone houses dated from colonial times. The Hallowells and the Hathaways were the mighty land owners of Happy Valley, and the Reverend Reginald Ottoway must have been zealous beyond discretion, she thought, when having married a Quakeress who had vowed to convert him to her faith and never to apostatize from that of her fathers, he founded a mission, or rather attempted to found one, on the very border of Happy Valley. She could recall, as she sat there with the miniature before her, an impression—nothing more—that the mission languished and the priest was disheartened. The memory was dim at the best; her father's death and the sending of her brother Joseph to his friends in New York, her mother's death, her brother a handsome boy in his teens, and a few years her senior, standing with her beside that coffin. Never would brother and sister be separated again; and that was farewell to Happy Valley.

Her candle burnt out and the fire was low. Why was she unwilling to open her door to her brother's child? Before she could answer, another face in her memory's keeping must be confronted; the face which more than any other she had banished for years. The languishing eyes had not changed, nor had he lost his haughty bearing, the high and airy pose of his distinguished head: a gay conscienceless creature, he stood before her again, Señor Almeyda, his gaze defying her scrutiny.

"What a devilish plot it was!" and she startled Jacko her parrot into croaking testily. "Two scheming men, one of them my only brother, plotting their escape from financial ruin by the sacrifice of my fortune, happiness, everything. And now his child comes, bringing it all back to me."

She lived it all over again. A marriage urged by her brother, precipitated by him; her fortune saving the firm from ruin; her learning not a fortnight after the wedding of the Spanish woman and her boys in Brazil, of how her brother had intercepted the poor woman's letters to her—there was no doubting the evidence of it all—and then her sudden resolve,

and the letter Señor Almeyda found when he came in whistling from his club.

"I know everything. The Brazilian correspondence, her letters and yours and my brother's, are in ashes on the hearth. The fortune of which you two have robbed me will hardly save the firm of Almeyda and Ottoway from dishonor. Think of me as dead."

With Nanny Ottoway in the shadow of the old chimney the house was transformed, for her silvery laughter rang out from its most sombre corners. Even the grim old portraits seemed trying to look hilarious when she chattered to them, and gave them droll names and a history. The twanging, jangling old harpsichord broke out in frolicsome waltzes, and Merit and America were enticed into dancing on the lawn, to the very melodies Mars Sam used to play on his fiddle down in Kentucky. But little Phil was disinclined to be reconciled to the change and had long pouts in his solitary retreats in the corn field. Pompey-Dick, Merit's pet crow, was another rebel. When Nanny was playing on the harpsichord he might be seen flitting ominously from one old portrait to another, or perching on his master's

shoulder blinking his sinister eye, he had but one, with an occasional sepulchral caw.

"'Pears like you hain't no manners, Pompey-Dick; you 've laid out to hab dem dangles in her ears. She'll cuff ye yet right smart, ole fellah. I shan't warn ye agin 'bout dat ar. Yu's don't like her—I see dat in your debbil of an eye." Then in tender confidence: "'Jes' ye wait, Pompey-Dick, she gwine ter wilt foah de mont's ober. She isn't dat kind ob an angel I'se been prayin' de Lawd for to send for Mars Phil. She'll nebber teach him and Miss Prissy and Meriky abouten de fire and de brimstone and de cha'yot wheels; but de Lawd knows de darkness dere is outen on dis farm I s'pose. I'se tole him offen nuff."

Merit was a good prophet. Not many days went by before the music and the dancing and the rhapsodies over the seclusion of the place were at an end, and the lengthening days of negative contentment began. Then came the season of despair, when Annie shut herself for hours in her chamber. Priscilla Ottoway was not blind to her unhappiness, nor was she disappointed. She would give Annie another home in good time. And then the November

rains began, when the girl would sit alone by her window gazing wistfully at the far off belt of woodland, shutting her out as she fancied from the happy world. She shunned the whole household, particularly little Phil, and repelled her aunt's attempts to lighten her solitude. When the snow lay deep in the valley, hiding the fences between the old house and the high road, she went to her bed to lie there day after day, speechless, and apparently helpless. Neither was that a surprise to Priscilla Ottoway, nor would she listen to America's proposed remedies, whereby the girl should be startled out of her dormant state.

"It is the outcome of inherited tendencies," said Priscilla Ottoway, tending her as a baby and without calling in a physician. There she lay upon her pillow until the slow footed summer came back, and with it the July days and the annual camp meeting.

The scent of the hay fields came in through the open windows, through which could be seen the tents on the camp ground.

Soon after sunset the singing of the worshippers fell upon Annie's ear; the monotonous wail of a revival hymn uplifted by hundreds of

voices. As the strains swelled higher and fuller, she turned on her pillow and listened. She was alone. Priscilla Ottoway had been called from home on business for a few days, and America and Phil were lost in their early slumbers.

Merit was sitting on the kitchen doorstep, Pompey-Dick on his shoulder. His pipe was out. He, too, was listening to the singing, and listening he remembered Zion and the pine wood camp meetings down in old Kentucky. It was a familiar hymn, the very one "de bredderin" shouted when he came up from the waters of baptism, old Mars Joswer standing on the bank, and little Mars Sam with a dog by the collar. That was a favorite hymn of old Merit's. His inmost soul was yearning to uplift his cracked basso with the faithful, but he had promised Miss Prissy he would stay away, and so he would.

"Mis' Prissy," he confided to Pompey-Dick, "tinks she's gwine ter keep we 'uns in de dark and dat gospel light ain't no count. I'se a lost candle sputterin' heah all alone. I'se most all in de snuffers, but de time's a comin' when Mis' Prissy and Meriky can't blow dis niggah out

eny moah. She s an awful sinnah, my Meriky. If I know'd dat dose preachers down dare soon as dey sot eyes on me, would say dat's Breckinridge's niggah, would I go down dar? Dat's de question, Pompey-Dick. O Lawd! what a sinnah I'se gittin'."

The singing had ceased. The whip-poor-wills and the frogs were in full concert. He sat with his face buried in his hands. Would he never again sing with the saints of Zion?

He heard a light footfall behind him and pressed his hands closer to his eyes. His heart stood still; one croak from Pompey-Dick, who darted into the bushes.

"O Lawd! O Lawd!"

"Merit," in a low soft voice, and there stood, could he believe his eyes? Miss Annie in her white dress, her hair flowing over her shoulders.

"I am going down to the camp ground. Yes, I am," imperiously. "And you must get up the low chaise. We can drive along the lane, and keep hidden in the shadow of the trees. You must go. Bring me the big camlet cloak. I will sit here until you are ready. Don't be long."

"Dat's de way He's always susprisin' me wid

His angelzes," muttered Merit, harnessing the horse. "Allus makin' me tink dey's somebody comin'. If I know'd dat was Miss Annie now, of co'se I couldn't be drivin' off like dis and she flat on her back six muns or moah."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOY PREACHER.

CHRISTOPHER BURKE, whose fame as "the boy preacher" drew an unusually great multitude to the camp ground that year, was holding his hearers spell-bound when Annie, with Merit closely following, found a seat near the pulpit. The night was oppressively warm. The camlet cloak slipped from Annie's shoulders, and her bonnet was laid aside. Merit had made her a comfortable seat with the chaise cushions, and the great oak tree behind which she sat screened her from observation. Every one was too deeply absorbed in the boy preacher to note her arrival. In a brief time she was enwrapt with the rest, and Merit's fervid "Amen" was added to the frequent response of the great congregation. The preacher was telling in homely phraseology, but with a strikingly musical voice, the story of how he had been drawn to the

Valley camp ground that day—a deviation from the track of the pilgrimage which he was making on foot. He could no longer be called "a boy preacher," he told them, although it was only seven years before when a youth of sixteen, he had gone forth alone to preach the gospel to the lonely cabins of the settlers in the Ohio and Genesee Valleys.

"I heard the voice of Him that leadeth me, saying: a soul, a solitary soul, sits in great darkness waiting for your coming to that meeting; a soul knowing not the cause of its restless expectancy, that it is the hunger for truth eternal, the thirst for the water of life." His clairvoyant gaze swept over the sea of upturned faces, but not until he met the transfixed gaze from the white face behind the great oak was the recognition mutual. His quest was ended, and he bowed his head in prayer, that the soul standing at the opened door of its prison-house might have the wings of a dove and soon be at rest.

In vain did Merit urge her withdrawal when the meeting broke up. The people were crowding around the young preacher. She knew he would come to her, and he did. He

held her limp hand a moment and said something about her soul's unrest, then Merit fairly carried her away.

"You must keep shet of dis yeah, Miss Annie, less yer wants to hab de powah, and go jumpin' ober de benches and de pulput like de debbil. W'en I got 'ligion, Miss Annie, nuffin' could hol' me. Old Mars Joswer, he 'low'd to Mars Sam—"

"Never mind the story to-night, Merit. Good-night. Be sure and put the cloak just where you found it."

She went down to her breakfast the next morning to America's grumpy astonishment. Had she failed to do so, but remained silent and helpless on her bed, Merit had believed he had been having another vision. The chaise was ordered, and America saw Miss Annie drive away with him little dreaming where they were going. A letter from Priscilla Ottoway that day announced that she might not return for a week. But she did not tell Annie that she had made arrangements for her removal to the home of a physician on the Hudson.

"I'se no use for sech gwines on," America broke out when she learned the state of things

with Miss Annie ; that she was a constant attendant upon the camp meetings, and could pray, as Merit said, "above de best of 'em." "Somebody's watchin' her. Somebody wid an ebil eye. Dere's no knowin' what she'll do foah Miss Prissy gits home. You'se a gone coon, Mars Phil, if dey onct gits dere ebil eyes on you. You'll be no count to Miss Prissy any moah. Merit dar will go foolishin' round 'em till he finds 'is sef back in Kentuck', see now if he don't. De whole of 'em would stop dere prayin' any time to catch a fust class run'way niggah."

The night Priscilla Ottoway came home she found a note pinned to her pillow. Annie was to be married the next morning to the "boy pilgrim" Christopher Burke. She was then on the camp ground.

"Christopher is a poor man. He has nothing but what is given him by the poor people on his circuit. I am to go with him on his long journeys."

"Silly child," mused her aunt, inclosing a well filled purse in the little trunk of clothing she sent after her. "Poor Nannie! It is her fate. That feverish taint in her blood: the

mixture of zeal for conversion of Quakers with the gift of tongues."

Five years after that summer, during which time Priscilla Ottoway heard nothing from the boy pilgrim and his wife, Christopher Burke stood beside his carpenter's bench sadly troubled in mind.

His strong-jointed hands kept their hold of the plane he was pushing energetically to and fro on Sister Rider's coffin when Deacon Soule entered.

It was high noon of a stifling July day. The sun smote the unshaded shanty with a pitiless fierceness. The rear door standing open gave a glimpse of green grass, and gay flower beds. A child's laughter rang in occasionally above the constant droning buzz of the saws in the neighboring mill. The front door opened upon the main street of "the Holler," and was flanked by two immense coffins, standing upright, their open lids suggesting sepulchral traps. The Mediterranean of "the Holler" was a goose pond; its forum the post-office opposite Christopher Burke's coffin shop. Deacon Soule was post-master, merchant, magistrate and grand magnate generally of the set-

tlement—fifteen or twenty houses at the most, huddled together in a stumpy clearing, some thirty miles from the Adirondacks.

Christopher Burke was the preacher of the section. Like the apostolic tentmaker of old he did not depend upon his labors in the gospel for the support of his little family. Saint Paul was a tentmaker for the living, he for the dead: he made coffins. His invalid wife and their one little girl Marjory lived in the humble tenement back of the shop. Mrs. Burke was not a favorite with "the Holler" folk. In fact they seldom if ever saw her. She never went "to meeting," and the judgment of the majority of the Christians of those parts was that she was not the living epistle a preacher's wife ought to be.

Every day in the summer the stage horn broke the perfect calm of "the Holler"; when the fishermen from New York and Albany—merry parties off for a Waltonian holiday—not only criticised the "God-forsaken place," but were given to making Christopher Burke's staring coffins targets for green apples and the like. On the day in question, Deacon Soule, who sought the prosperity of "the Holler" second

only to that of Jerusalem, had been over to remonstrate with Elder Burke against the defacement the place suffered from his eccentricity in advertising. Meeting with no encouragement that the offensive wares would be removed, Deacon Soule had expressed the wish that the Methodists would make haste and finish their chapel; he wasn't a "Methody" himself, but he wanted to see the town growing, and the place made attractive to settlers.

"The day's gone by for a place like this to be dependin' on a travellin' preacher. The folks are mighty pleased with that Elder Starky. They say his wife can preach as well as his self and has a farm over in Galway besides." Just then his quick eye discerned a boy with a tin pail, a prospective customer, and he shot out between the coffins, lending a momentary air of activity to the drowsy corners.

"That is just what it is coming to," said Christopher Burke, mechanically resuming his work, to stop short the next minute, as if his muscles were leaden, "and then where is bread coming from?" He took off his paper cap and dropped it on the shavings. "I know it is coming. Those Methodists are going to

crowd me out. Deacon Soule will help them. Taking away those coffins, those sermons to the godless who hang around the Hollow, wouldn't change things. I wish I could talk to Annie. Well," with a deep sigh, a firm shutting together of the thin lips, "if it is the Lord's will it is mine. He shall lead me, step by step, to the bitter end."

Again the shavings are curling round the plane, and a child's laughter is heard in the little garden. He hears it, and stops a moment to listen, and with no lessening pain.

"I shall hear His voice in this darkness. I must. The message will come." The far-away sound of the stage-horn was borne to him on the lifeless air. I may get a letter to-night, I believe I shall, calling me to preach somewhere next Sunday. I used to get calls enough, more than I could answer. Something has gone wrong, has changed the hearts of this people. Though He slay me, I will trust in Him."

Another long blast from the stage-horn, then the rumbling of the old coach across the long covered bridge. Down the dusty road it came, the dusty vehicle his hope had transformed

into a chariot of salvation. Another long pause in his work, in which a mouse crept across the lid of Sister Rider's coffin, and then he walked slowly on to the post-office.

Only one letter by that mail, and that was for him.

Strange, he thought, that it should be addressed to "Mr. Christopher Burke."

Deacon Soule was inclined to comment on the same, and did say something about it doing preachers no good to set up shop as if the gospel calling were not to be trusted, but Christopher Burke was deaf to all but what his heart was saying,

"It is from the Lord, the message has come at last."

CHAPTER V.

COUSIN CHRISTOPHER.

"DEAR COUSIN CHRISTOPHER:

"I have found you at last. That we are cousins you will not question, when I have given you the proof of that same.

"Your father was a younger brother of my father. I am bound to say you never knew before where your relations were, if you knew you had any. I know your story, an orphan boy given away to emigrants going West. A fine time I have had tracking you, and now you may thank your stars that I did not give up the search."

Christopher read on slowly through the closely-written sheets his cousin had sent him. He was the fifth generation in descent from one Captain James Burke, an Englishman, his cousin had written out his pedigree in full, and the heirs of that James Burke had been advertised for in the English papers. An attorney

had written from London offering to take up their case. Two million pounds lay in the Bank of England awaiting them if they could prove their relationship. A convention of Burkes was to be called forthwith. Would Christopher come to it, and would he go to London to represent the heirs?

The shop seemed spinning around as he sat there staring hard at vacancy, a strange ringing in his ears.

No, he would not tell Annie, not until he was quite sure. To see her cheated of a hope like that, the very thought was unbearable. What a day it would be to him, and to her, when he might tell her that she was a poor travelling preacher's wife no longer, that their sorrowful poverty was at an end! But he would first be sure, very sure, that this great Burke fortune was not a myth. How confident he was of his heirship already.

He would write to his cousin at once, telling him that he would be in New York without fail at the time of the convention (D. V. of course). It was hard to find paper whereon to write, and in rummaging his high desk which contained his library, three books at the most, the rat-

tling of the coin in the box containing the contributions for the new meeting house, startled and confused him. He had been amiss in depositing it. Deacon Soule had asked him several times if he had done so. Deacon Soule seemed very uneasy about the safety of a fund that could not exceed ten dollars at the most. He would have to borrow money to go to New York. Surely there was no reason why he should hesitate in borrowing of that box, considering that he should be able at no distant day to restore fourfold.

He was doing his best with his sputtering pen, pale ink and excited brain when a little girl ran through the shop, singing out that she was going to ask Deacon Pendleton for a little skim-milk. Mamma had sent her, and she was to tell him that there was nothing for their supper —as if that were something to be merry over. He did not see her when she came back with an overflowing pail, a big butterfly held fast in her fingers. But she insisted on his hearing that she had seen a wiggly snake, and ever so many squirrels.

"Yes, my dear little daughter. Eat it yourself. You and mother. I am not hungry."

He mailed the letter at once, and then ordered a pound of Deacon Soule's best coffee, and a liberal supply of other necessaries, with a confidence that fairly stupefied that merchant, who was already despairing of a partial payment of the preacher's account.

"Goin' to preach over to Cranberry to-morrer?" without turning to the supplies.

"No. Not to-morrow. And a dozen eggs please, Brother Soule."

"Yes; oh—yes. 'Pears like interest is dyin' out savin' with the Methodys. They seem to have money enough."

"And so shall I in a few days, more than enough to pay you and every one who has helped me over a hard spot." The exhilaration in his voice and manner had instant effect, and his wants were promptly supplied.

"I am glad to hear it. The Lord will never forsake His people. How much did you say there is in the contribution box?"

"Ten dollars perhaps; possibly a trifle more."

"Better let me carry it over to Funder to-morrer."

The preacher walked out with a springing

step. The next morning he surprised Annie by telling her he was going away on the down stage, might be gone several days, Deacon Soule would let her have what was necessary. She listlessly received his parting kiss, never asking him where he was going. But the brown bare-footed little Marjory clung to his hand until the last moment, and then she ran in the dust behind the stage until it left her crying alone by the roadside.

Not many days after, "the Holler" was in a whirlpool of excitement.

Christopher Burke had mysteriously disappeared. His wife lay in a semi-unconscious state and could tell nothing.

The contribution box was empty; Deacon Soule could explain that deficit.

For a week or more the excitement was intense, then it gradually ebbed away, the more important matter of how the deserted wife and child were to be provided for taking its place. Then an unknown woman, from no one knew where, arrived, and taking possession of the coffin shop and the destitute family, promptly paid every demand upon the preacher, and made

good the meeting house fund, besides giving away the scanty household goods. Before the little community could find out who she was and where she came from, they saw her driving away with the preacher's wife and child.

"That beats all that ever happened in these parts," said Deacon Soule, proceeding to appropriate the two great coffins at the shop door. "Who ever see neater things for vegtibuls and sech?"

"De lightning hab struck sum war," Merit had told Pompey-Dick a week before this event at Mills Hollow, when after carrying a letter to his mistress she had lost no time in leaving home, only bidding America to have the east chamber in readiness for her return. "Didn't I heah de Lawd sayin' only last night, 'Keep a prayin', Brudder Merit, and you'll fetch de cha'yot and all de hosses will be a wearin' of deir golden bells'?"

Christopher Burke had been persuaded by his erratic cousin, who had met cold response from the Burke family generally, to go to England and secure the great fortune. He had barely money enough to pay his passage. His faith in the English Burkes made the rest seem easy, even

his unexplained desertion of wife and child. It would all come out right in the end. When he was worth thousands of dollars, what would Annie think of the pangs it had cost them! So he had sailed away, but not without sending a letter to Priscilla Ottoway, begging her to haste to the relief of her brother's child, who, with her little daughter, was in extreme need.

"Until I come back to them—which God grant I may some day—they will know nothing of me, and I must bear as best I can the thought that Annie believes I have forsaken her—forever."

CHAPTER VI.

THE BRECKINRIDGE TREE.

AMERICA'S strong arms carried Annie up to the east chamber, and laid her tenderly upon the bed, in the old place. She gave no signs of interest in anybody or anything.

"I 'lows dis is a laster," she said in return to Priscilla Ottoway's brief explanation of her absence. "She won't be runnin' out'n dis yer any moah. She's cum back to de old brack mammy for good," crossing her arms serenely. "She'll be my baby for good and allus, my baby to keep. I 'lows she cumfatabler heah than she's bin sence she got up afoah, when dat preacher sot his ebil eye on her," cursing him under her breath. "Some folks gits rested one way and some anudder. She'll take a heap moah restin' dan mos' of us."

"I 'lows," meekly ventured Merit, when Priscilla Ottoway had left them there alone, for the capering chattering little girl was insisting

upon going to the woods she saw from the window to find her papa, "dat de Lawd 'll shake her up when de time cums. He's makin' ready to shake us yer from the sellah doah to de eave trofs an' dat——"

She silenced him with a look, and he crept submissively away, doubting if Miss Annie had been out of that room for years and years, and if he had not been under a delusion and snare concerning her marriage and absence. He found Phil putting up a swing in the barn for the little girl, who having never seen a negro before, impatiently questioned him as to the effect of soap upon his face and hands.

The years went by, and Annie Burke still lay in a trance-like condition most of the time, betraying no interest in anybody or anything. Not until Marjory had grown to be a tall slip of a girl, did there come a gradual awakening of the suspended energies: something akin to the beatific states, long flights, as Plotinus calls them, of the alone to the alone; visions she made feeble efforts to relate, if any one would assist her in recalling them. Christopher Burke's name was unmentioned in all those years, nor was his memory interwoven by ever

so faint a thread with her fantasies. Marjory had early learned that her father was not to be spoken of, not even to Phil, who when she had timidly or defiantly introduced the subject, always succeeded in diverting her from it.

Such a royal playfellow he was for her, the solemn faced boy; bending down tall saplings for her riding; helping her to climb up to the nests he guarded with loving care; letting her have a hand in breaking the colts, or thinking she did; and when would he not leave work or books or almost anything to fly the wonderful kites he made for her, down in the broad meadow? He taught her to read, besides, but she never found a story book so fascinating as Merit's stories of old Kentucky; stories she encouraged his telling over and over and with an elaboration of detail the old man delighted in. She was perfectly acquainted with Uncle Joshua and Mars Sam and Miss Titia, and knew the maze of the Breckinridge pedigree so accurately, the second marriages, adopted heirs, and remote branches, the exact size of the slipper worn by each of the Breckinridge beauties and other important details, that he often had to refer to her when his confused memory

needed prompting. She had even helped him in drawing the Breckinridge tree on the barn door; that tree with a branch quite as conspicuous as the main trunk. The rest of the family were heartily tired of the old story and sternly frowned upon its repetition, particularly Phil, but Marjory would even encourage him to tell her how the big branch was Samuel Ashland Breckinridge; how his mother was a Breckinridge; and that it was in her getting married the second time that all the trouble came about somehow, yet only that for that second marriage there had been no Mars Sam, and even the Breckinridges without Mars Sam had been of little account.

The mother of Samuel Breckinridge aforesaid, was first married to the Honorable John Barkenstone. Letitia Barkenstone, "Miss Titia," had been educated at the North, her handsome fortune happily secured from her spendthrift step-father, who scattered his wife's, and left her an almost penniless widow, when the boy Samuel was but a lad. He was her only son, and a bachelor uncle, Uncle Joshua, gave them a home on his Blue-grass plantation. Their relations with Letitia Barkenstone had

become unpleasant and almost completely sundered because of that lady's espousal of the cause of the Abolitionists; her guardian at the North, with whom she had lived since her mother's second marriage, being a prominent leader of the unpopular movement. Uncle Joshua died when Samuel Breckinridge was a wild boy at Harvard. His landed estate fell to Letitia Barkenstone; his slaves to Samuel Breckinridge; the mother having died long before.

Before Letitia Barkenstone had passed her majority, her devotion to the slave became the absorbing enthusiasm of her life. Nothing could entice her into the meshes of matrimony. Her time, her strength, and her dollars, were devoted to the bondman. Martyrdom for the slave was something to be prayed for, and her cross was in the denial of a martyr's crown by the pathway Garrison and Lovejoy had made glorious, for her at least. Upon her Uncle Joshua's death, she was possessed with the idea of manumitting his old slaves; buying them at any cost; making Samuel of course her ward and heir. She reached the plantation soon after Uncle Joshua's funeral, and won the im-

pulsive Sam to adopt her scheme straightway. Not that he was ambitious to become a second Wilberforce, but empty pockets were inconvenient, and life on a Blue-grass plantation had few attractions for the gay Harvard boy. He would not consent to give up "Daddy" Merit, however. All the rest might go, but Daddy Merit—why he would as soon think of selling Uncle Joshua, had that saint been spared to earth! The scheme evolved other difficulties, petty differences between him and his autocratic sister, and the result was a bitter quarrel. More than that, the enlistment of every planter in the locality against the woman who was spreading her offensive views, even in the cabins of the slaves. Her immediate departure was requested; not only requested, but significantly advised. In her resentment she sold her lands at a sacrifice, and returned to Philadelphia, leaving her half brother to get on as he might. The breach between them was declared by her to be irreparable. In his desperate strait, Samuel Breckinridge rented his slaves to the buyer of the estate, a wretched specimen of a Yankee overseer, and then, that he might never witness

what he knew they would suffer, left the country.

No one knew where he went, least of all Letitia Barkenstone, who declared in their last interview that she had washed her hands of Samuel Ashland Breckinridge forever.

But the old slaves of Uncle Joshua she did not give up so easily.

She sent an agent secretly to effect their deliverance from their cruel task-master. Old Merit was pouring out his full heart in prayer in his pine woods oratory, when the tempter met him. America had driven him out in her wrath, and he had had no supper, and that when he had smelt the corn roasting on leaving his hard work in the field. He could never decide satisfactorily who was the more to blame for his "cl'arin' out" that night, Miss Titia or 'Meriky. Miss Titia's money was in his pocket, and 'Meriky's tongue in his ears; but before he had gone many miles the former gave out, and he longed to hear the latter, and dimmer and colder grew the North Star.

"You see, Mis' Margie, Mis' Titia was fur drivin' us all up out o' Egypt wedder we was ready for gwine or not. Jes' as if Moses hadn't

waited for de Lawd to start off all de people at onct, but had been hidin' in de woods, coaxin' 'em to run off to de wilderness one on 'em at a time. Dat's de way she run me off. Me and 'Meriky ought to have marched up heah with t'ousands all playin' on deir harps and fiddles and sech. I'se 'shamed to say, I is, dat I was de fust Breckinridge niggah dat eber made free trash of hisself, and I'se no free trash eder, if Mars Sam's livin'. I'se a fifteen hundred dollar niggah, and b'longs to Mars Sam."

"How old would Mars Sam be if living?" asked Marjory one day.

Had she demanded an astronomical calculation, the effect upon Merit had hardly been different. He pulled desperately at his wool nibbits, then strode solemnly to the barn door and faced the Breckinridge tree. Taking a piece of chalk, he began making a quantity of hieroglyphics.

"Wal, I reckon Mars Sam was nigh on ten year old when his mudder died. And old Uncle Joshwer sez, sez he, 'Merit, you jis keep yo' eye on dat boy.' And I had to be spry, Mis' Margie, dat he didn't get out'n sight. Den Mars Sam he went schoolin' up Norf,"

pointing to a marvellous symbol of Harvard. "De first Kissmas he come home I didn't know him jis for de whiskers. He was nigh o' age when Uncle Joswer died, and it wasn't six weeks ater we was all down to de pine woods meetin' house, and I was gwine ter preach dat night and Mars Sam was bound to hab a lark. And I jis read my tex' when in frew de doah kem all Mars Sam's dogs a yelpin' and tarin', for hadn't he bin draggin' a mackeral long de floah and inter de pulpit, and dere was no turnin' dose dogs out, and dat was gret fun for Mars Sam'!'

"But how old would he be to-day, Uncle Merit?"

"Dis niggah's head wuks mighty slow sumtimes," taking off his hat and searching its inner depths. "As I lib, Mis' Margie, Mars Sam if he's libbin will neber see forty agin. Only tink of dat now," sitting down for contemplation. "Heah's I bin talkin' as if he was a handsum young fellah chirp enough for you, Mis' Margie. O Lawd!"

Priscilla Ottoway and the old house changed little with the years. Neither acquired a reputation for hospitality, but the high bars gave

place to gates, and the warning against the dogs disappeared. The household at Barley Flats were sufficient unto themselves. Jerry Burns still drove the Valley stage. His interest in the old house lessened with the mystery, yet he would tell snatches of the old story when he had a stranger on the box.

"A queer kettle of fish they are over there, making the best of it. Odds and ends from all kinds of leavins I take it. Mighty smart girl that Marjory: she'll mount any hoss you can saddle, and some you can't for that matter. Capering over the hay stacks and up to the tree tops like a squirrel. Ever hear of the Boy Pilgrim? He was her father; run off, you remember, with meetin' house money; never heard from; never will be accordin' to my notion. Best farm in the valley; kept up smart; ther's nothin' payin' Mis' Otterway don't go inter."

Priscilla Ottoway seldom left the farm. Phil attended to everything that was to be done in the village, and that in a curt reticent way, winning no friends. Marjory would chatter like a magpie with almost any one, but Phil was a check upon her. And yet Phil never meant to thwart or disappoint her. Did

he not go to Kentucky just to please her in pleasing Uncle Merit; spending some time in the vicinity of Uncle Joshua's old plantation; learning all that could be learned of Samuel Breckinridge; that he was last heard of in Europe where he was leading a reckless life, or as his neighbors said "going to the dogs!"

CHAPTER VII.

SIR VICTOR NEVANDELESS.

MERIT'S philosophical proclivities were forever leading him into his besetting sin; into what in a Thales or a Socrates had been called abstraction, but what in Merit's case was, as America said, "jis moonin' about noffin, settlin' up tings wid de Lawd."

He naturally chose a hidden nook for his ponderings, his formulating the unanswerable.

His matrimonial infelicities were never a part of the burden he bore to that hidden nook. Life without the stimulus of the old mammy's temper had been too serene for his liking. He did not even bemoan her contempt of his visions, his faith in the unseen. He needed something to make him remember his covenant.

His greatest trouble was Mars Sam. His heart yearned for him. If Mars Sam were in trouble, he wished he might know that he had

as good as fifteen hundred dollars in a good nigger, who if he had run away—all because of Miss Letitia—and run off America besides from a neighboring plantation, was ' no free niggah', but belonged to Mars Sam jis the same. Next to Mars Sam was his crow, or rather crows, for he never had been without one pet crow at least, and a world of trouble they had cost him with their thieving.

After long meditation he resolved upon an experiment.

" Now jis ye see dis yeah, Mars Phil," showing the crow's egg he brought up from the woods and slipped into the nest of a circumspect old hen, " I'se gwine ter start right wid dis un. Scripter law is jis as good for crows an' chickens as fur sinnahs. I 'lows de rest on 'em hab bin a bad lot. No moah dat sort a pickin' an' a stealin' round heah. Dey couldn't forget all dey larned wen little chillen down dere in de woods. I shet down right heah dis day on all sich crows. Dis crow is comin' up on gospel plan. You'll see what startin' right an' goin' on right 'll do."

He stoically awaited the result of his far-sighted vigilance, and then for additional safe-

guard named the crow chicken after Uncle Joshua's laziest mare, Poll-Betsey.

Alas! As Poll-Betsey grew in years and beauty, she was an alarming illustration of hereditary evil. Of all the crows that had flocked to old Merit's shoulder this tenderly nurtured Poll-Betsey was the biggest thief. The morning Marjory's ruby ring was missing, a ring Phil had given her, Poll-Betsey was sentenced to death upon circumstantial evidence. She had been seen in the tree outside her window, that was enough. Merit hobbled away muttering, the condemned bird on his shoulder. Why didn't they suspect one of Merika's white chickens he'd like to know, or the crows in the corn-field?

"Tings must hab looked wuss dan dis to Aa'on when Moses kep' hid out in de woods," he offered in consolation to his pet. "Moses was cl'ar gone; dere was no mistake 'bout dat. Mis' Margie's ring is cl'ar gone; dere's no mistake 'bout dat. But don't I know de bringin' up you'se had? I ain't gwine trow up ebery ting at onct, jis as Aa'on did. Why didn't he go and beat de woods for Moses befoah he made a calf an' set de folks a hollerin', like dey

are up in de house 'bout dis? Poll-Betsey, if you'se a tief, so am Meriky's ole hens an' her turkeys. Wussent you all chillen togedder? Wouldn't de debble cunger dem as soon as you? I jis hope Meriky's ole gander has dat ring. I'se a min' to open his crop, else how's w'ebber ter find out?"

It was time to find Poll-Betsey's nest, Phil said, and so it came to pass that June morning in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and forty-five, that Marjory was up on the roof of the old house, with the intent of exploring the thicket of overhanging boughs; or rather she had climbed up the garret ladder with that intent, but having sat down upon the ridge-pole outside, she forgot the ruby ring and Poll-Betsey's hidden nest entirely unless her dreaming eyes were seeking them in the cloudless blue above her, or off on the misty hills shutting in the wide valley, or down among the meadows, or in the billowy wheat fields, or where the river was gliding away like a silver snake.

Peering about in the old garret, she had brought forgotten things to light: the faded pink sunbonnet she used to wear in the gar-

den behind the coffin-shop, when her father stood behind his work-bench with the fragrant shavings around his feet, the drone of the saws in the mill almost drowning his voice as he sang snatches of hymns. How beautiful the world was, but where was he? What was that chasm in her life into which he had disappeared? Why did she never study it, look at it fairly, ask questions about it? Would he never come back? What a great, beautiful world it was! What a journey the circuit of the landscape would be, how many houses, homes she could see, each one a world of its own, and in many of them young girls like herself! She had seen and knew some of them. Were they all content to live always in the beautiful valley, to know nothing of the world beyond the hills? She was not. Phil was. That was the difference between them. Phil was precisely like Aunt Prissy in thinking they needed nothing for their happiness but what they had at Barley Flats.

Phil was calling, a trifle impatiently, from the sky-light ladder:

"Have you found it?"

"Found what? Oh yes—No, I mean.

Come up here. It's like a sky island. I'm lost on a sea of clouds."

He was not to be diverted from his search. Cautiously making the circuit of the roof he parted the vine tangled hemlock boughs, and soon found the hidden nest behind a dormer window, snugly sheltered by a hoary pine tree. He had hardly found it only for a dazzling ray under the deftly arranged twigs—a diamond in the head of what proved to be a gold pencil.

Marjory's dreaming was ended. Where in the world had it come from? Poll-Betsey had stolen it, of course; and there was America's thimble, and the ruby ring, and a spoon, and no end of bits of bright tin.

"Somebody in the neighborhood is putting on a tin roof," Phil said, while Marjory was studying the indistinct inscription on the pencil.

"I can not make it read any thing but 'Victor Nevertheless.'"

"Nonsense, as if any one had such a silly name! And yet it really looks like it, Marjory."

"It must be Nevandeless, Phil. Victor

Nevandeless, what a lovely name!" her eyes sparkling. "He must be some fine gentleman stopping in the village, a Sir Victor Nevandeless perhaps."

"Nonsense. I'll take the pencil to the village to-night and find out about it. There's a party of land speculators at the tavern now."

"But don't you remember, Phil, that young gentleman in the velvet hunting dress we saw last summer, who asked you about the trout streams? Well you know it came out that he was Sir Harry Somebody, and I was always sorry you did not talk with him longer. Now this Sir Victor Nevandeless—"

"Oh, Marjory, how nonsensical!" he was trying to slip the ruby ring on her finger, but she paid no heed.

"You must not tell any one about this pencil, not even Aunt Prissy, until we find the owner and all about it. Promise me that, Phil."

"But do you care nothing about your ring?" rather sharply.

"Oh wish it on, Phil," snatching it off and dropping it upon his outstretched hand—a brown knotty hand. "Now say after me just

what I say, then I'll never lose it again." She held up her plump finger repeating :

> " This ring on your finger will stay by you
> As long as the giver is kind and true."

For a moment he looked inclined to toss it back to the crow's nest, then he slipped it in place.

" One would think we were playing at lovers, Phil." He blushed, but she was looking at the pencil again.

" To think of Poll-Betsey giving us so much, such a chance for a little romance ! Shall I tell you what I expect to find in Sir Victor ? He is tall and only a little older than you, Phil, but he don't look like you one bit," laughing merrily at his scowl. " His socks are not over his shoes, and his eyes and hair are black as velvet—"

" Those devilish crows ! " broke in Phil, starting for the sky-light ; " there's fifty to every hill of corn."

" Never mind the crows or the corn," and she held him back. " Sir Victor Nevandeless will teach you hawking."

" I hope he has offered a reward for the pencil."

"Oh Phil," with undisguised contempt. "If you take anything for finding that pencil, I'll never forgive you."

"Not if he is one of those brass-throated stump orators, working the county for Polk?" They had dropped down in the shadow of the great chimney.

"But he wont be," her hands clasped around her knees, her eyes far away. From seeing nothing, they suddenly brightened and expanded with discovery.

"Look off through the trees there, Phil, over the river, up on the hill. Don't you see it, something glistening? Who is building a house right there in the woods?"

Phil stood up and made a telescope of his hands. Not a mile away from them, as the bee flies, but three or four by the road, a dazzling eye shot through the trees.

"That's where those bits of tin came from. There's a kind of tower. A queer place for a house. Land is mighty poor about there."

"Everybody don't care so much for land as you do, for seeing how many potatoes they can get out of an acre. The view from that hill is magnificent."

"I heard them talking at the post office the other night," said he, "that somebody from New York, a rich old doctor, had taken up land about here somewhere for a summer residence. I thought it was over by Conesus, but that must be it, and that's where Poll-Betsey found the pencil."

"A rich old doctor?" sarcastically.

"Well, there's no knowing who is with him; a house full of idiots perhaps. I shouldn't take much stock in a man with such a name: Victor Nevertheless!"

"That's because you don't know anything but this farm. Very well," for he was disappearing down the skylight, "I shall find Sir Victor this very day."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HERMITAGE.

AT the base of that turret with a new tin roof, upon the wide porch of Dr. Wardell's charming hermitage in the Genesee Valley, or rather upon the Genesee Heights, Samuel Breckinridge was sitting that same afternoon, one of a party of four, Dr. Wardell, and the little company so carefully selected for a sojourn "in the wilderness." Skill in whist playing, a preference for "Boz," and indifference to the political ferment of the day, had been eminent qualifications for invitation to this rural retreat. The doctor was Uncle Wardell to them all: Elizabeth Culbertson, Victoria Barry and Samuel Breckinridge, but kinship was remote save with the former, the only child of his twin sister. "Kin lies in something besides pedigree" was an axiom with the doctor. They were a drowsy group that afternoon, too dull for whist or read-

ing or sustained conversation. The easy chairs were luxurious, the languorous air heavy with the breath of the clover meadows, and from the cool depths of the woods came bird song in full chorus, with the sound of the mowers in the field beyond. They had each made pilgrimage to the Hermitage to enjoy doing nothing for a while, and that afternoon they were realizing the fulfilment of their anticipation. The expansive old gentleman in the wide bamboo chair was Doctor Wardell, his rosy beaming face suggesting a pink sunflower nodding above a calyx of snowy ruffle. He was unmistakably the most striking personage of the group. His brass buttoned blue coat, spotless white duck trousers, blue velvet slippers embroidered with ox-eyed daisies, and his silver snuff box within reach on the card table beside him, made a charming picture. He lazily swayed a palm leaf fan, the maccaboy accumulating on his buff waistcoat and white ruffles with every meditative tap upon the silver box. He had been reading aloud from Pickwick, of which he never tired, in the muffled unevenly modulated voice common in the very deaf.

Merit was right. Samuel Breckinridge

would never see forty again. His bald crown was fringed with iron gray hair. He had a sallow face, very sallow, and his figure was slight. His heavy moustache was white as snow, and there was a capricious gleam in his black eyes, something half contradicting the impression that he was an *ennuied*, embittered man of the world.

One thought of Diana when they saw Cousin Beth—Miss Culbertson—the queenly blonde beauty that she was, with a cameo-like profile, her abundance of hair knotted in a coronet held by a silver comb. She must have been the youngest of the group, yet she, like Sam, would never see forty again. The stout stumpy little figure at her side, her face nearly concealed by a drooping hat brim, her voice a kind of musical growl, her laughter its echo, was Cousin Vic. That low drooping hat was habitually worn to hide a sadly disfigured face.

* * * * * *

"I've solved the mystery," and Cousin Vic broke the slumbrous stillness by an emphatic heel tap. "The ghost of the dead Pan of this solitude has my pencil."

"I thought the thrushes were telling you

something," yawned Sam. "Possibly when Pan sees the advertisement on the village bulletin board he will claim the reward."

"And that will be our first call."

Another long silence. The doctor was asleep.

"You will never see that pencil again," biting off a cigar. "We have the novelty of a mystery."

"That pencil was my talisman. Did I tell you about the inscription: 'Victor Nevertheless'? That is one of Cousin Beth's sermons—a reminder. She gave me that pencil years ago."

"That is where you get your pet phrase, is it, your characteristic rejoinder,—nevertheless?"

Cousin Beth's hand dropped the fan with which she had been gently fanning the doctor. She too had glided into dreamland.

"Robinson Crusoe was a happy dog," Sam was soliloquizing. "What a comfort it is to be rid of bells."

"How do you spell it?"

"Either way."

"But we are not beyond the sound of the church-going bells. You will hear from that steeple in the village next Sunday morning."

"I was thinking of door bells particularly.

The exasperating call of most country church bells always reminds me of old Merit. I can see him pulling away at the big cow bell hung high in a pine tree on Uncle Joshua's plantation, calling the hands to meeting on a Sabbath morning. Uncle Merit usually did the preaching. I would like to know what became of Merit."

"Perhaps he'll turn up with my pencil."

Cousin Beth started up bewildered from her doze.

"I was dreaming of Letitia Barkenstone. She was in an ascension robe. Did I tell you what the madame told me just before we came away, that Cousin Letitia has gone into Millerism, and is spending a great deal of money scattering their books and papers, and is supporting their preachers?"

"Uncle Wardell told me something about it," Sam said, seemingly half asleep, and quite uninterested.

"Pity Dan couldn't have one of their charts," spoke up Cousin Vic. "The study of one of those flaming hand-bills of prophecy would do Dan good; would divert him a little from Saint Peter's chair."

Sam dropped his cigar, and covered his face with a handkerchief. Cousin Vic threw a light shawl over his shoulders, against which he made feeble protest.

"I doubt the wisdom of your sleeping here," she said, "but you will have your own way in spite of me."

"The madame," was Mrs. Wardell, the wife of the doctor; Dan, Daniel Livingston Van Horn, her only child by her first husband. Her marriage to the doctor was comparatively recent. The gay world of fashion, in which she moved, an imperious leader, had given up Doctor Wardell as a hopeless bachelor, when she suddenly whisked him away to Hymen's altar. He had retired from practice, that nothing might interfere with the saraband of gaiety. He was satisfied to dance at her dictation, until he suddenly lost his hearing; then all was changed, and he had gladly withdrawn from the pantomime where he felt like a puppet with a broken wire, resolved to spend the rest of his days as comfortably as a deaf man with a preference for seclusion could. Not that his devotion to the madame had diminished one whit, far from it, or that he had a tendency to

misanthropic isolation. She was fond of gay society and he was not. Dan and she would spend the summer as they liked best and he would do the same. He had lived on a farm when a boy. There was a language in nature he should never fail to understand and love. Sam Breckinridge had turned up at the nick of time ; just back from Europe ; evidently out at pocket, and glad of a quiet retreat for the summer. Sam was an expert at whist ; was the best of company. Sam and Cousin Vic would get on well together. The madame's plans would prevent her from coming to the Hermitage that summer. The madame was not drawn to the Hermitage. She had said to Dan, in sacred confidence, that excepting Cousin Beth, the doctor had invited an odd lot to stay with him out there in the woods.

"Oh, Sam is all right," Dan had assured her; "a Breckinridge is never to be received on suffrage. The fellow has not a dollar in the world he can call his own, I suppose, and unless he makes up with Letitia Barkenstone, it's hard telling how he is coming out. And she has gone off on another tangent ; Millerism this time. Well, don't read any of the stuff she

sends you. You are very susceptible, you know, to spiritual contagions."

She was standing before the pier glass in her dressing-room, arranging her purplish black curls, freshly dyed that morning. At the word contagion, she had thrown up her hands in affright.

"I am afraid I have caught it, Dan," sinking into the nearest chair. "I couldn't help reading those tracts, and it's terrible! terrible! My nerves are in an awful state. Why, do you know, Dan, Letitia Barkenstone reads Greek and Hebrew, and she has seen signs in the heavens and—"

The end of it was the madame and Dan had departed for the Springs not long before the hermits set out on their pilgrimage to the Genesee Valley. Dan would see that packages from Letitia Barkenstone did not reach his mother. He allayed Doctor Wardell's fears on that score. The doctor, like the rest of the fashionable world in which Daniel Van Horn was prominent, placed the highest estimate on his rare virtues, believing that "the boy" would come out right in time. That he had not yet struck that happy equilibrium his

staunchest friends were forced to acknowledge. To see Dan Van Horn at his best was not when he stood in the organ loft of Saint Cecilia, his pale intellectual face illumed with ecstatic fervor, his heavenly tenor soaring away with the hearts of his listeners.

His ambrosial locks and spiritual physique were cultivated by his mother rather than himself, and some of his friends had called him the Fra Angelico illumination of her life. What heightened the interest in him was the whisper that he would study for the sacred ministry, only that he had been unsettled by the Tractarian controversy of the day, and was vacillating toward Rome. What more could be said to make a pensive young man with such languorous blue eyes intensely interesting?

"Poor Dan!" his mother confided to her dearest friends, "nobody knows the pall he is under, nobody but me. What do I know about the reaction of the Reformation, post-baptismal sins, visible heads of invisible churches and all that? I shall be glad when he does know what to believe, and I shall believe whatever Dan does."

But to return to the group on the piazza.

Sam had fallen asleep and another shawl had been thrown over him. The doctor was nodding. The two ladies withdrew to the other end of the porch, were they might chat over their sewing.

"Did I tell you of the letter I received from Dan last night?"—this from Cousin Beth. "He says the madame talks in her sleep of apocalyptic visions, and that she gets up at all hours to seek a sign in the heavens."

"Umph," grumpily from under the hat.

"It seems that an English party has joined them at the Springs, and one of them, a clergyman, is making a study of the Miller fanaticism. She hears the subject talked of continually, and really she is getting in a very bad way."

"She'll be coming here of course."

"I hardly think so; and yet Dan writes as if he wishes they might."

"I knew they would come," dropping her work and folding her arms. "Did you never think that Adam and Eve had something in their exile to be thankful for? Better hoe thistles in a strange land than have all creation sowing your bowers to brambles."

But Cousin Beth was hardly listening.

"I have been thinking of Letitia Barkenstone all day and what she could and must do for Sam," lowering her voice.

"Don't you think the woman is deranged?" throwing her head back until the round convex spectacles were visible.

"Possible she was never arranged. I have thought that if she really believes the world is to come to an end this fall, she may be disposed to make her peace with her brother."

"She is likely to impoverish herself in Millerism, it is said. Sam had better become a convert."

"She is a shrewd financier, not easily duped; and unless she is greatly changed, she would drive a hard bargain with him if he did."

"She thinks he is dead, don't she?" sewing briskly, her work held close to her eyes.

"She pretends to think so," said Cousin Beth, telling Dr. Wardell, who had shaken off his slumber and drawn his chair beside them, upon her fingers what they were talking about.

"She may preach to me all she wants to," he said, looking for his page in Pickwick, "if she will only will do the right thing by Sam. I am a Harry Clay man myself, and don't take any

stock in Texas Annexation, and mobbing Abolitionists, and all that, but when a woman like Letitia Barkenstone takes fifteen hundred dollars in good money out of her own brother's pocket, as she did out of Sam's when she ran off that old Merit he talks so much about, I would have her answer for it in some way, that's all."

"Well, what difference does it make whether she did or didn't?" asked Cousin Vic musingly, mindful of a slight movement in the couch. "The grand farce is to end sooner or later in a stupendous spectacular display, a burning up of the experiment in which Omnipotence has been plainly outwitted, as I see things. If the world is to end this fall, as Letitia Barkenstone is preaching—"

"Fiddlesticks!" said Doctor Wardell, who had been nervously watching Cousin Beth's interpreting fingers: "I thought her too sensible to go into such a crack-brained delusion."

"Now it won't do for old fashioned Churchmen like you, Doctor Wardell," speaking slowly that Cousin Beth might not miss a word, "to call the literal Second Coming a delusion. Why don't that 'quickly' give believers better reason

for expecting the end this fall than eighteen hundred years ago?"

The doctor laughed and fanned his rosy face vehemently.

"Yes, I am an old fashioned Churchman, thank the Lord. When the Church cries out that the end of the world is at hand, that will be time enough for me to arise and shout 'He cometh'! I'll trust the learned prelates of England for not letting a Yankee farmer get the start of them in blowing the trumpet of Zion."

"But the Church has taught more than once in her history that the end of the world was close at hand. From the beginning there has been a faction in the Church, and not seldom the dominant majority, proclaiming the field ripe for the harvest, the bonfire ready for the spark."

"The literal rather than the spiritual interpretation of the word," Cousin Beth was saying, when Doctor Wardell's wandering gaze was transfixed upon the figure of a young girl emerging from the wood.

"We have a visitor, ladies," and he arose and descended the piazza steps, his face beaming a welcome; "one of the wild dryads of these

woods, possibly. She seems inclined to retreat. How in the world did she ever get over that fence?"

Phil and Marjory reined in their horses beside the thick wood, behind which they knew "the Hermitage" was to be found. A road from the highway had yet to be opened. The only entrance was by a lane across a neighboring farm. Not until Marjory had dismounted, and that without his aid, did Phil discover that she was in unusually fine feather for the occasion. Her usual riding costume, a boy's hat, a sober brown frock, the short skirt revealing her neat top boots, had given place to a green cloth habit, gay with silver buttons, a velvet cap with snowy plume, and what struck him as the most nonsensical finery of all, a pair of long yellow gauntlets and a whip unlike anything he had ever seen before. How fine she was! and he had never seen her magnificence until that moment; and she had been enjoying his blindness, of course, letting him ride beside her in his butternut corduroys, and without his coat, of course, for was it not a very hot day? Well, he was not sure he would have dressed differently even to please her. He had no idea of making

a fool of himself for this Sir Victor Nevandeless. From the bottom of his heart he hoped the owner of the pencil was some crusty old fellow, who would offer her a shilling for her pains. A lesson of that sort might be wholesome for some folks, thought Phil, taking Nan's bridle without a word, while Marjory peered through the jungle to discover something like a path, with sharp comment upon Sir Victor's disregard of the convenience of his visitors. Phil had his hands full with Nan, but he saw Marjory toss her smart whip over the fence, "As if she needed the silly thing," mused he, and before he could help her she was on the other side herself, the long train of her riding habit over her arm.

"Now don't get into a fume, Phil, if I am not back in half a second," and she readjusted her pretty cap. "There's no knowing what I shall get into, you know," laughing merrily. "But that's what I like, an adventure like this. I'll use my whistle if I need you, if I find myself in the meshes of a fiery dragon," and she disappeared, and only that Nan was master of the situation he would have followed her.

"To think of my letting her go off alone like

that! Stand still, you vixen," laying a caressing hand upon the glossy mane. Nan champed her bit, pawed the turf, pointing her thin ears backward and forward, stretching her head far over the fence, whinnying in answer to the voice calling to her once or twice. "It's a fine pair you make, you two, you are about as much as I care to handle. You hate the bit and bridle, don't you, Nan?" drawing the snorting nostrils close to his cheek. "It wouldn't take much to spoil you. Any fool with a whip could do that. How much would you be worth in the plough, Nan? Not the shoes you stand in, would you?"

CHAPTER IX.

MARS SAM.

BEFORE she found herself in full sight of the group on the Hermitage piazza, the adventure had lost its romance to Marjory, and she became painfully conscious of the impropriety of what she was doing. She half wished she had asked Phil to go with her, "butternuts" and all, but there was Nan, and then Phil would have given up the pencil just as if he meant it should bring him an honest penny. No, she would go through with it. What was there so dreadful in giving up a pencil stolen by a pet crow? But she had not thought to reach the house so soon, and to confront such a company, evidently surprised at her appearance.

She stopped short, tapped her foot with her whip handle, and having mastered the impulse to retreat, advanced with a long swinging step, her head thrown back, her brown cheeks

glowing, the pencil upheld in her hand, the sight of which and her simple presentation of it to Dr. Wardell, made her reception the reverse of embarrassing. And she was soon seated in the midst of the circle, telling them in her sparkling way of Poll-Betsey, and the discovery of the turret, with an amusing account of the dispute concerning the inscription "Victor Nevandeless."

"What a dreadfully disappointed child you must be!" said Cousin Vic, throwing back her head to scrutinize Marjory through her eye-glasses on a level with the tip of her nose. "What havoc the actual is bound to make with one's ideal! Ah, here is our Sir Victor Nevandeless." For Sam had come forward after having been a silent listener to the conversation, seemingly asleep; a conversation in which old Merit had had special mention. In the confusion of the presentation Marjory missed hearing his true name, for Dr. Wardell, unnoting the introduction, was telling the pranks of a pet crow of his boyhood, and Marjory, all unused to such courtly addresses as that of Sir Victor, lost the true name entirely.

"If you will believe me," said Sam in a con-

fidential aside to Cousin Vic, Marjory giving attention to the doctor's every word, "I was dreaming of that old house I saw from the turret this morning, when I woke up hearing her story of the crow's nest and the pencil."

Marjory became conscious of Sir Victor's absorbed attention in her animated conversation with Miss Culbertson, and the thread of her story concerning some of old Merit's entertaining peculiarities had been hopelessly tangled but for Sir Victor's graceful assistance. He led her on in her story telling until she was quite at her ease again, and had given them pleasant glimpses of life at Barley Flats.

"I know your house very well," said Sir Victor. "I had a long look at it through my glass this morning. I think it was trying to tell me you were coming over here. It blinked its one dormer window of an eye confidentially, but I am not so wise as Cousin Beth here in such matters and I did not really understand. She will talk with you of the personality of houses and all that, and convince you that houses have an inner consciousness independent of their inmates."

"We ought to have a Society for the Promo-

tion of Sympathy with Neglected Houses," spoke up Cousin Vic. "A society for the interpretation of inarticulate barns, the cultivation of sympathy with unappreciated meeting houses, the relieving of the woes of old mills, and the like."

Marjory thought she heard a peremptory whistle from beyond the wood and arose rather abruptly to take leave, declining Dr. Wardell's offer to send for her horse with a decision he was forced to admit as final.

She had shown some hesitancy in inviting them to Barley Flats, but the invitation had been given, and warmly accepted, Miss Culbertson interceding for the life of Poll-Betsey, to whom the Hermitage was so much indebted. Thereupon Victoria Barry begged that the condemned crow should be given her, and Sam importuned, when Marjory assured her she should have him and welcome, that old Merit be permitted to bring him to his new home, an arrangement Marjory consented to, concealing her misgiving of Poll-Betsey's arrival in such case.

Sir Victor followed her down the steps, and to her great discomfiture signified his inten-

tion to attend her through the wood. He walked beside her, saying airy nothings with charming grace, and removing every obstacle from her path. She smiled when he helped her over a thread of a brook she could have cleared so easily without him.

"Black servants are very uncommon in this neighborhood, are they not?" He was walking before, holding back the obstructing boughs.

"Oh, yes, they are few and far between." She could hear Phil chiding Nan. What a time he must have had waiting so long, and the mosquitoes so troublesome! She wished Sir Victor in Timbuctoo.

"And this old Merit's wife is with him? America, I think you called her—such odd names some of those Southern negroes have."

Now Marjory had not mentioned America nor Merit's Southern antecedents, and only that her mind was elsewhere she would have remembered it.

"We always call her Meriky. I call her mammy."

"That's Southern," stopping short, but she did not turn around. "How long have these blacks been with you?"

"How long?" Possibly the shade of impatience in her voice prompted him to move forward. "You will have to ask Aunt Prissy. Their coming here was before my time."

He had fallen behind her, holding back an elder bush for her to pass, and she did not observe the change in his voice when he asked, "But are they contented here at the North?"

"Contented? Why shouldn't they be?"

"But this old Merit, does he never have what he calls his 'down days', when he feels 'never so sot down on' in all his life?"

"Those are his very words when he is in a croaking fit; but then he is the happiest of us all!"

"He misses the old plantation life of course. I can not believe he is really happy here. I have lived at the South, was brought up among negroes. A homesick nigger!"

"But they are not homesick," persisted Marjory; "and how do you know that they ever lived in the South?"

"Oh, a little bird told me."

"Yes, I know what is said by everybody, but no one can prove their surmises. I suppose if it were widely reported that runaway

slaves were harbored at our house some one would come and drag them away."

"Nonsense, Miss Burke; you know better. You admit, of course, that the rightful owner—"

"They have no rightful owner but themselves."

Phil's whistle rang shrilly through the wood.

"Readers of the *Liberator* believe, you know, that slavery is the sum of all villainies."

"Yes, I understand," he said slowly.

Another imperative whistle.

"Yes, Phil, I am coming," cheerily and sweet. Then, lowering her voice to Sir Victor:

"Now you will see my adopted brother. He has good reason for being vexed at my staying so long;" cutting short a pretty compliment by adding, her eyes sparkling with fun, "I must introduce you as Sir Victor. Please mind your part."

"Ah, Phil, is it you?" He was glowering savagely enough. "Beyond this wood I found the land of romance; behold the knight of my quest, Sir Victor Nevandeless!"

It was impossible for Phil to do more than glance at Sir Victor, who stood twisting his

long moustache and expressing his pleasure at the meeting, with regrets that Mr. Ottoway had not accompanied Miss Burke to the house.

He sat down on a log to look matters in the face. He must first make sure that the old black man was no other than "Uncle Merit".

If so, what a godsend! Letitia Barkenstone should pay for their freedom, and so make a partial reparation. What a lucky dog he was after all! That morning he could have sworn that fortune had deserted him utterly. He would not care to confront the scorn of that young girl's eyes did she believe he would traffic in human flesh: send their old servants to the block. He did not mean to do that; would not do it. Cousin Vic must help him in devising a clever scheme for outwitting Letitia Barkenstone.

* * * * *

"You are bound to ruin that mare, Marjory."

She had let Nan have her head and Phil had kept up as he could. They had turned into the cross road leading to the old house when their horses fell into a leisurely walk. Phil was the first to speak.

"Now don't begin to fret about Nan," eyeing him covertly. "Why don't you tell me what you think of Sir Victor Nevandeless?"

He maintained a successful pretence of studying the condition of her horse.

"Never mind Nan," with winning persistence. "How did you like Sir Victor?"

"Sir Victor!" contemptuously. "When you make me believe that is his name it will be after to-day. Did he pay over the five dollars?"

"Oh Phil! Phil! what a blunder!" One smart stroke of her whip and Nan shot ahead like the wind. He held his horse in check, and rode meditatively in a whirlwind of dust, until he overtook Marjory at Peggy Cameron's cottage, the lodge at Barley Flats. The twilight was falling, and Peggy's shrill voice shut out the song of the chirruping insects, and the lowing of the cows, to which he had been listening as he dreamily whipped the dust from his trousers. If Marjory had a mind to spoil Nan, she must, that was all, but he would not hear her talk about that idiot, Sir Victor.

But Peggy Cameron's story drove all else from his mind. She was telling it with both

hands held tight over her heart, her wide cap border flapping to her gasping.

"Oo, ay! He's gist gane up ta t' hoos spite o' a' I could sae and da. He's a wild ranter ta be share. His wurrds come like water frae a fon. Danal says he's been scraughing roond the town for a week or mair an' cursin' abody frae the Bible in his han' and tellin' God Almighty is gaun to burn up the wurld afore neist hars't, an' the laddies warkin' sae hard a' simmer."

"Oh, Peggy, to think a pious old saint like you should be afraid of anything the Lord can do;" and Marjory's laughter pealed out like silver bells. The barking of the dogs was heard near the house.

"Make haste, Phil. Did you tell him about the dogs, Peggy?"

"Oo, ay; it's naithing he cares aboat dugs an' auld wives like me."

"I know the man," Phil was saying. "He was preaching on the post-office steps yesterday with his cattle show of a chart. He wants the camp ground for a Millerite meeting."

"Oh, let him have it, Phil; don't let Aunt Prissy refuse; a Millerite camp meeting would be rare sport for us, such a lark!"

CHAPTER X.

ELDER STIGGINS.

THE summer of 1844 is memorable in the history of fanaticism.

The tenth day of the seventh month, October 23d, "with a marginal extension possibly, but not probably, to the 25th," was the day fixed upon by the believers in the doctrines of Father Miller, as the one designated in prophecy as the last day, when the Lord should literally descend from heaven, and the world and all that therein is should be burned up. These believers, some fifty thousand in the United States, went forth that summer to proclaim the Midnight Cry. The Christian world was sensibly disturbed by their proclaiming in season and out of season that the end of all things was at hand. Thousands who scoffed at the teachings of Father Miller in public, trembled in secret: doubting if he were not a true prophet, and if they for

their cowardice should not be burned up root and branch.

The fanaticism was no new thing in the history of Christianity. It was a fresh outburst of an old error, the legitimate result of centuries of authorized teaching; the mathematical deductions from literal interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy.

Millerism burned over a wide territory. William Miller was a devote Bible student of the school of literalism, nor did he originate the inflammatory gospel whose first fagots were kindled by the misinterpretation of the promise "behold I come quickly."

The open opposition which Millerism received from the established sects was not against its fundamental theory that the prophecies should be interpreted literally, but the legitimate outcome of that theory, the pretended discovery of the exact time of the Second Coming by that same literalism. The calculation of times and dividing of times was right enough if stress were not laid upon the grand total, the amount of a simple sum in addition. A distinction was to be made between the mathematical certainty, and "thus

saith the Lord." Bible students, the world over, were absorbed in the doctrine of the millennium, the resurrection, and the return of the Jews. The literalists were far in the lead in the treatment of these subjects, and it seems strange to us of to-day that the revival of the cry of the Speedy Coming was sneered at by orthodoxy generally, and its converts turned adrift from the venerable crafts that could not endure the perpetual trumpeting of the Midnight Cry.

Looking over the considerable and most respectable literature of that fanaticism to-day, one is at loss to see what the denunciation of the literalists was founded upon. Millerism was the grand illustration of literalism. How plain it was on the old Millerite chart, with its astounding delineations of the beasts of apocalyptic vision, the expression in pine and paint of some untutored conception of what Nebuchadnezzar's image was like, deftly contrived for separation, kingdom by kingdom, the great dragon with its tail lashing the stars, the mathematical calculations verified by Scripture in large type, all testifying that time must end A. D. 1843. The fact that the year 1843 had

passed by, and that the summer of 1844 was well advanced, was satisfactorily explained. Eighteen hundred and forty-three Jewish time, did not end until 1844 Roman time, and who would question that Jewish authority was paramount in such matters?

The believers had trimmed their lamps and gone forth to meet the Bridegroom in 1843. That going forth they found in due season was, according to their interpretation at least, a fulfillment of prophecy. "Though the vision tarry, wait for it." It would tarry until October 25, 1844. The words "of that day and hour knoweth no man" had no reference to what one could not help but knowing, they said, if the Bible were studied as it should be. The exact time when the stone should smite the image on the feet, how could they help but know it with their calculations of the seven times and their knowledge of the precise duration of the several kingdoms? The seven times began with Babylon, 677 years before Christ, and these seven times were 2520 years, and then like any simple sum in subtraction was 2520—677=1843. The getting of that 2520 years was easy enough:

one had but to multiply seven (representing times) by 12 (representing months) and the product by 30 (representing days), and there it was. And so with the prophetic calculation illustrated by the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the "great and terrible" beasts of Daniel's vision, seemingly striding in dread processional through a maze of dates. Mathematical calculation and prophecy led to the sure goal there was no evading, A. D. 1843. And so with the rest of the prophecies of the Second Coming—prophecies whose realistic representation by horned beasts, angels blowing trumpets, and flowing vials, the casting of the devil into a bottomless pit, etc., etc., all culminating in A. D. 1843, made the old Millerite chart a powerful attraction to the scoffer, who could find no error in its mathematics, however he might marvel at its zoological eccentricities.

They were in earnest, those "tenth day Millerites of A. D. 1844." The heroism of the martyrs of old repeated itself in their adherence to their faith, their scorn of derision and persecution. Their unploughed and unsown fields proclaimed their disbelief in another harvest. The Millerite preacher was ubiquitous. There

was no escaping his chart and his tracts, and many, dissatisfied with the dry dust of the orthodox theology, found a grim fascination in the near fulfillment of Father Miller's gospel. The spiritual ignorance of the masses was, as ever, the ready building material of a delusion supported by half truths and fallacies. Few of us can realize what it was to live in constant expectation of hearing the trump of doom, of going to bed each night confident that the graves might be giving up their dead before daybreak.

When Marjory and Phil rode up to the porch, the preacher was too absorbed in emptying vial after vial of prophetic wrath to note their arrival. Each of his listeners had a growling, infuriated dog in check, except America, who was hardly to be trusted with one on that occasion. Priscilla Ottoway stood in the full starlight making vain efforts to be heard, to send the intruder away, but she might as well have spoken to the wind.

"Woe unto you, Pharisees, Hypocrites!" sawing the air with his arms, his long, limp coat suggesting draggled plumage, his harsh voice husky and broken with excessive overstrain.

"Woe unto you, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God! The doom of Sodom and Gomorrah awaits you! You have spit upon the Lord's anointed, and so it shall be done unto you in that day, that day that cometh, that shall burn as an oven, that shall burn you up, root and branch."

Phil uplifted his whip with an oath. "Off with you," and the dogs yelped with excitement.

"Smite, if you will," serenely managing to get out of the reach of the lash, while Marjory begged Phil to control himself. "He will pour out His fury upon the horse and his rider"—Phil had not left his saddle. "He hath sharpened His sword for the slaughter. Cry out and howl, son of man," stepping back with wise caution; "smite thine hands together, and He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, when He is come to overturn, overturn and overturn;" drawing closer and closer to the porch, within whose shadows Priscilla Ottoway had disappeared, after ordering Merit to take the dogs away. The preacher was now gazing stonily at Marjory, rolling out his Scriptural phraseology at her, his long finger pointed steadily to

her face. Nan was cropping the grass where she had left her when she slipped from the saddle. The girl stood with her riding skirt over her arm, contemplating their strange visitor, plainly amused by his speech and gesticulations, and impatient lest Phil should abbreviate the comedy.

"Daughter of Babylon!" and Marjory made signs for Phil to keep silent. "Daughter of Babylon, the whirlwind is gathering that will shrivel your beauty, and hurl you out from your pleasant places, and dash your lovers to the ground!"

Phil would bear no more, and the preacher's exit had been precipitated in spite of Marjory's intercessions, but for a shrill prolonged cry from the window of Annie Burke's chamber, which turned every eye in that direction. There she stood in her white raiment, her hands clasped in entreaty.

"Do not send him away, you must not! He brings me a message," and before Priscilla Ottoway could reach her, she had dropped to the floor in a swoon. In the excitement Elder Stiggins placidly took possession of the most comfortable chair upon the porch, and when

America, who was the first to remember him, came down from Annie's chamber, he was quietly looking over the pile of tracts he had brought forth from his big carpet-bag, having helped himself to a candle and a glass of water.

"You'd bettah be gittin' out dis yeah," and she planted herself stolidly before him, her arms folded, her eyes regarding him with the dull, narrow vision Merit had learned to interpret as a warning.

Elder Stiggins stretched out his hand. "I praise the Lord, sister," rubbing his rejected hand warmly as compensation for his rebuff, "that He hath brought my feet within your gates this night. My foe hath become my brother, my familiar friend, and in the name of our common Master, dear sister."

"We'se no use for massars round heah," never changing a muscle; "you'se bettah take you self orf," her fingers moving stiffly up and down, an ominous warning.

Marjory was, however, in season to prevent what seemed inevitable. Her mother's words had not been in vain. The sullen old mammy was sent to the kitchen for food for the preacher, and then there was no withstanding Marjory's

plea that he should have a bed. Phil sighed, but Aunt Prissy consented. She rose, however, betimes in the morning to hasten his departure, which was easily brought about on her consenting to let the big tent camp meeting have the use of her grounds. What did it matter to her what doctrine was preached there?

Merit was awake. He had not slept that night. He stole out in the day-break and joined the preacher on the cross road. He came back at his nimblest gait, after a short interview, well loaded down with tracts. He awoke America, or rather before she was half awake he gaspingly began.

"It's comin' now, Meriky. Didn't I tell ye? Hab'n't I bin tellin' ye seems like a tousand yeahs? Who'd ye tink is gwine fur to preach on dat camp groun'? Bress de Lawd, Meriky, 'fore I tells ye," dodging her wide sweeping arm. "Jes ye listen now," for America was muttering dire threats; "ole Miss Tisha is comin', she gwinter preach, dis preachah said so, gwine to preach hows de wuld is comin' to an end dis fall."

America rose up slowly from her pillow and Merit edged nervously nearer the door.

"Jes ye open dat winder wide. Let me see jes who is talkin' dis heah." He threw back the shutters with a slam and planted himself at the foot of the bed. "If dat isn't you, Merit, ye jis tote yesef outen dat doah 'foah I'se take de nonsense outen ye; dere's been nuff of de debbil's speakin' and makin' bleve roun' heah." Her sphynx-like study of his anxious face convinced her that she was dealing with tangible things. "Now I'se got suffin' to say to yer, Merit," her voice sinking into its sepulchral depths, her gaze fixed upon the palms of her hands: "de debbil has an eye on us heah—on Miss Annie and Miss Marjory and"—with closer scrutiny of the lines—"yes, on de hul of us. Dat wussent Miss Annie lookin' outen dat winder, and dat wussent no preachah for ye to go bressin' de Lawd ober; and mind ye, now, mind wot I say, dere won't be no Miss Tisha eder." Merit falteringly tried to contradict her. "Not anudder word 'bout Miss Tisha. Tinks I'se gwine ter bleve it's Miss Tisha? Den wars Uncle Joswer and Mars Sam, and wars me and yous gwine to 'foah ebber dis world gits on fiah?" Again Merit tried to explain. "You jes lebe the debbil to me. Don' ye go foolin'

roun' him callin' him de angel ob de Lawd, les' yer wanter be sold down de ribber, and whose gwine ter buy a broken up ole niggah like you? Jes ye wait until Miss Annie wakes up dis mawnin' and see wot she says 'foah yer goes on foolishin' about, bressin' de Lawd.

"Look a heah now," calling him back after he had crept out crestfallen, and was holding fast to the door handle for a minute lest he should groan outright. "Jes yer look a heah. Don' ye go tellin' Miss Margie dat Miss Tisha's comin' heah like a poor-white-trash-preachin'-woman. Don' you let me heah yer sayin' dat of de Buckinridges—dat dey's goin' ter preachin' and baptizin'. Miss Tisha's pow'ful sot, and when she says de Lawd is gwine ter burn up de wold, *He'll hab to do it.* She'll blow the trumpet, she will, when she gits ready. Mind now, don' you tell nobody it's Miss Tisha, or yer don' git any moah 'baccer, and I ain't foolishin' dis mawnin'!"

He went down the lane shortly after in a state of bewildered despair. If that were not Miss Annie in the window, and if the preacher were the devil, and Miss Titia should not be Miss Titia, and he should be sold for a "poor

ole niggah" down the river—how timely the burning up of the world would be!

Annie slept later than usual that morning. She gave no sign of remembering what had happened the night before. Nor did she betray the slightest interest in any allusions to the preacher. Her face brightened when Marjory was telling Aunt Prissy of her visit—not a full account of the adventure by any means, and it was not strange that Priscilla Ottoway was too absorbed to call out the detail which would have resulted in gentle reprimand. Merit should carry Poll-Betsey to their new neighbors that very day. She was only too thankful to be rid of the troublesome bird.

CHAPTER XI.

"EPOCHS FOCALIZE."

IN all his wanderings Sam Breckinridge had carried Uncle Joshua's hickory cane, a sure staff fashioned by Merit's own hand from a sapling grown on the old plantation. Its head purported to be an exact similitude of Uncle Joshua's favorite mare Poll-Betsey, and was the work of Merit's jackknife.

The scheme for identifying the fugitive was of Cousin Vic's devising. When Sam Breckinridge, who was watching the old house with the turret telescope the next morning, declared that he could make out a rider lazily moving across the meadow to the highway, Cousin Vic gathered up her crocheting and followed him, he playing drum major with Uncle Joshua's cane, to a shady nook near the opening in the fence through which old Merit, if it were he, would pass.

Victoria Barry's phenomenal gift was that of

whistler. Her imitations of bird song were remarkable, and as they made their way along the bosky pathway she trilled the air, as a mocking bird had done, of one of the tunes Master Sam used to play on his fiddle for Merit's supreme delight.

Sam was exceptionally jubilant, singing snatches of the old melody, between bits of story telling. He found a pretty and comfortable seat for Cousin Vic, and then threw himself down upon the grass beside her. Her hat, as ever, was drawn well over her face, but leaning on his elbow puffing his cigar, he could see her mouth, and for the first time he discovered how sweet its expression was; and straightway he fell to musing if it were her absorption in counting the stitches of the intricate pattern she was following that made it so, for he had always thought there was something hard and scornful in Cousin Vic's mouth. And so there was, he admitted a moment after, when having found her needle's clue after cabalistic muttering, she began, digging at her work as if her hook should bring answer to all she asked:

"Sam Breckinridge,"—a moment's pause—"just as soon as your health will permit you must

set yourself to doing something, you must go to work."

He studied the mouth steadily for a moment; yes, it was sweet after all. The momentary gleam faded from his eye and he was drowsily watching the gyrations of his smoke clouds, when she resumed a trifle more sharply than before:

"In the world's grand field of action, how can you be contented in—"

She stopped short, she was counting on her pattern again.

"Have you yet to learn, most noble, most wise Victoria,"—not a shadow of a smile on her mouth—"that putting a canary into a frog pond will not give you a good singer of bass? The Breckinridges, my dear lady, were sent into this world—this world of action—as an antidote for its horrible epidemic of activity."

"Sent into this world? How glibly you adopt the phraseology of divine quackery! But let that pass. Answer me. How can you passively submit to live a drifting meaningless existence, when with your own hands you may hew out—"

"Something resembling this achievement of

old Merit's," with a glance at the cane beside him. "He cut that nag's head from love unfeigned. Hideous as a work of art, only think if he had been compelled to fashion it for some one he hated, and that without self-confidence in his genius, without hope of success, what it would be?"

"Nonsense, you make your pretended depreciation an excuse for inertia. You know you do not wholly undervalue yourself."

His cheek flamed. The hand that had lain so languorously upon the grass was uprooting it by wisps. He tossed his cigar into the thicket, then getting up, stood twisting his long moustache. She was counting again, jabbing her pattern with her hook. If he had turned a somersault and was standing on his head would she be aware of the fact?

"Now, Sam," with persuasive authority, "go find that cigar, for you have only begun to smoke it; you cannot afford such extravagance. Sit down here; I have something I particularly want to say to you, something I came down here with you to say."

"Hadn't I better be looking for that cigar stub?"

"No, Sam, no, I'll forgive you this one, if you'll only never do so again. Hear me out, Sam." He began peeling the bark from a birch tree with infinite painstaking. "Hear me in the rôle of a prophet. Unless you play a sharper game than you have ever played before, Letitia Barkenstone will take your last trump."

He was biting off a fresh cigar.

"Something more than an antidote for activity is needed in this case."

"Well, what is needed?"

A hard question for her to answer evidently.

"In Yankee parlance," she said slowly at last without looking up, "you will have to play *sharp* with Letitia Barkenstone."

He was listening closely.

"Or she will outwit you." Another long pause.

"Don't you see what you have got to do?" throwing her head back and adjusting her curved glasses for a prolonged study of his face.

"Call it finesse, or cunning, or what you will, it is your only way of circumventing Letitia Barkenstone if this man turns out to be your

runaway slave. You must 'go into' Millerism. She must seem to convert you."

"I feel premonitory symptoms of real conversion already," retorted Sam, gaily sitting down beside her, then sighing wearily. "I am longing to be in dead earnest about something, anything, and to be associated with those who are. Look at these Millerites. They burn their ships behind them. I saw a farm the other day grown to weeds. Its owner believes he has reaped his last harvest. I couldn't help admiring that man and his weeds."

The sound of horse's feet was heard on the highway and Sam pushed carefully through the thicket to reconnoitre. It was old Merit, droning out a psalm tune and muttering at intervals, a basket on his arm, his wide-brimmed hat far back on his head. He alighted, and leaving his horse biting the grass passed on to the house. Sam asked no further proof of the identity of the man, yet he planted Uncle Joshua's cane directly in the path by which he would return, and where he could not help seeing it. Merit was climbing the fence when it met his eye, Victoria Barry warbling the old melody like a mocking bird in sorrow.

"Oh Lawd of mussy!" dropping on the other side and seizing his horse by the bridle, pulling him after him down the road. "I wondahs if I'se a dead niggah? Wondahs if I'se gwine to wake up outen dis yeah? I wish Meriky had seen dat cane grinnin' right up to de sky, and Uncle Joswer's face a blowin' out on it like a sunflowah."

Drawing up by the roadside at last, to mount the poor beast, he discovered that he had left his basket by the fence, a treasure of America's it would never do to return without. He waited in the blazing sun until he could retrace his steps in the protection of some one, falling close into the rear of a farmer's wagon.

There was the basket, but the cane and the mocking bird were gone. What wonder that his cogitations were far from cheerful, and that many of the mullein stalks bordering his way seemed to be undergoing marvellous transformations into walking sticks. Marjory alone would listen to his story. She feared old Merit was getting into a bad way.

Had he seen no one at the Hermitage but a servant?

"Seed no one, Miss Margie," rolling his eyes and uplifting both hands palm outward. "De next time yo' wants anyting ober dere, jes' send Meriky. I'd like her to see and heah wot I did dis mawnin'."

Sam Breckinridge scarcely smiled, and Cousin Vic, who was watching him rather than old Merit, as well as her near-sighted vision would permit, saw that the episode affected him painfully. He had in fact been strongly moved to reveal himself to the old man, and his first exclamation was regret that he had not done so.

"Better wait until you can give him his freedom," said Cousin Vic.

They were walking slowly back to the house. Cousin Beth was calling to them from the porch, where she stood holding up a letter in each hand, interrupting their discussion of a subject Sam Breckinridge was plainly indisposed to discuss.

"Make haste and hear the news!" Cousin Beth was calling out.

They sank down in the piazza chairs with listless expectancy.

The doctor was scanning his newspapers, a

diversion plainly incidental to the more momentous matter of discussing the contents of the many closely written sheets in Cousin Beth's hand.

"We must talk it over together," she said cheerily. "The madame is coming, and," looking with a betrayal of uneasiness toward Sam, "and Letitia Barkenstone."

"Epochs focalize," growled Cousin Vic.

"Let us pray," said Sam, his head bowed upon Uncle Joshua's cane. "The swirl swirleth. Read your letters."

"The madame's letters are a kind of journal," said Cousin Beth, slipping the sheets over for selection, "and in what she writes from Newport several weeks ago, I see that her English friends have become dissatisfied with Saratoga, because of a tiresome professor and his pedantic wife who will talk of nothing but the fanaticism and prophecies and types and anti-types. The professor was a great annoyance to Dan in many ways, insisting that the Tractarian movement is a question of æsthetics mainly—the English romanticism of the nineteenth century."

"How could he?" said Cousin Vic, with mock concern.

"And he was forever driving Dan into an argument, holding that Dan, as a possible candidate for the priesthood, must be ready to defend not only every assailable point in his creed, but to state wherein formidable heresies differ from the true faith; and so they made off to the mountains. And now I will read from the madame's letter."

"'Who should ride in the same stage with us for some twenty miles but Letitia Barkenstone. She has changed but little, is beautiful as ever, and her conversational powers more remarkable. Lord L—— was completely carried away with her. He considers her the most original type of American character he has seen in the States. When she learned who he was she whipped out her Bible and began such a discourse as I never heard about beasts, and horns, and pagan Rome, and papal Rome, and the churches generally—which she calls Babylon. She said that "the English Church was the eldest daughter of the mother of harlots." Only think of it! I was half vexed with Dan for reading Martin Chuzzlewit through it all, and never hearing a word. She said she was proclaiming "the glad tidings"

throughout the land, and should preach every day and night, until time should be no longer. What if it should be true after all, dear Cousin Beth? At times I am paralyzed with terror?'"

"Then Dan writes me: 'Wherever we go we are fated to hear this subject discussed. Some one is sure to give her a tract or to call her attention to some freak of nature. Lord L——, who has been our constant companion, has begun writing a series of papers on the history of the Millenarian doctrine for one of the English reviews. He attends the meetings of Miller's followers, talks with their preachers, and finds a world of interest in what is the cause of real trouble to me on poor mother's account. If she were with you, Cousin Beth, I know she would cease to think of it in the way she does, for you have such sensible ideas upon those subjects, and she is so powerfully influenced by you.'"

"Of course she will have to come," sighed Cousin Vic, "nevertheless—"

"Will she bring her gay party with her?" asked Sam.

"The doctor will write her this afternoon to come at once, with or without her party, just as

she thinks best. Nor is he at all disturbed at the possibility of Letitia Barkenstone coming," and she began telling the doctor upon her fingers what they were talking of, for he had thrown aside his paper and was restlessly walking up and down the porch.

"We'll make sensible women of them both," broke in Dr. Wardell, rubbing his dumpy little hands together in a most self-satisfied way. "When the madame sees that Cousin Letitia's faith won't admit of her signing everything over to Sam here, and giving him full possession next year, she'll see how much there is in this Miller nonsense after all. Sam," laying his hand on Sam's shoulder, but Sam did not raise his eyes, he seemed to be making a kind of divining rod of Uncle Joshua's cane, "how about the old darkie? We missed seeing him, Cousin Beth and I. Is he your man, old Uncle Merit?"

"He is my old Uncle Merit," bringing the cane down with a thud.

"Good! What a hand full of trumps! It beats all, his turning up with Letitia Barkenstone! She writes that she is coming to these parts to attend a camp meeting, and she hopes

to find us, so as to give us the Midnight Cry if we have not been supplied already. Ha! ha! Now, Sam," extending his snuff box, "you must write to her this blessed day. Tell her you are here with us, and if she comes, as we hope she will, as we sincerely hope she will, why she must suppress that Midnight Cry, for I shall not consent to the madame hearing one word of it, not one word."

"Had you not better prevent her coming here at all?"

"No, my boy, no. I want to see her, have been wanting to see her for years. Tell her to come, tell her so for me, and to-morrow we'll all drive over to Miss Ottoway's and see the runaways. The sooner you have an understanding with Miss Ottoway the better. Let her know just how things are: that you mean to give those blacks their freedom, and that there is no danger of their being sent back into slavery. Of course you'll say nothing about our extraordinary discovery to Cousin Letitia; but before she gets here, you want to learn from old Merit the full particulars of his escape, her part in it especially. I don't see why she won't have an exceptional opportunity for really

emancipating two slaves as well as testify how much there is in all this talk of believing that the world is to burn up this fall. Hey, Sam?"

Sam wrote the letter, not a dozen lines in all, and gave it to Cousin Vic to read.

"That's just the letter, Sam, a kind of unfulfilled prophecy. The interpretation depends on the interpreter." And feigning an exultant rapture, she sang the refrain of a hymn familiar in those days.

"In the morning, resurrection morning,
We'll all rise together in the morning."

CHAPTER XII.

AN OLD MASTER.

IT was late in the afternoon. Phil was working hard in the hay-field within sight and call of the open window where Marjory sat almost lost in refashioning an old lace shoulder cape of her Aunt Prissy's, for since that visit to the Hermitage she had thought not a little of her personal adorning, had tried making a coil of her boyish ringlets, and had studied the effect of a trailing gown like Miss Culbertson's. For she could not rid herself of the belief that the gate of her seclusion was swinging wide, and that in the new world to which she was going, ribbons and laces and pretty gowns would be in order. She could hear Phil sharply reprimanding Merit occasionally; for the old man was very "heavy handed" with his work since taking Poll-Betsey to her new keeper, and had he been mowing a miraculous crop of hickory canes that afternoon had scarcely made slower

progress. What with Marjory's interference in his behalf, and her telling over and over a simple version of the story of Sir Nevandeless to her mother, in whose chamber she was sitting, the dreamy revery she was disposed to indulge in was disconnected and tantalizing.

"Tell me again, dear," would come feebly from the pillow, dissipating the creations of her fancy; and then Marjory would tell the simple story again, the heavy eyelids falling with her soothing voice. Hitherto Marjory had sung snatches of songs when sitting beside her, or let her imagination furnish the daily entertainment the purposeless broken will had somehow established as a household rule. The prolonging of that drowsy interest in song or story had been very slow, but it had attained a choice in the subjects presented; and Marjory had noticed that day, the indifference to everything but Sir Victor, inevitably as her mother had fallen asleep at the beginning of the story.

Priscilla Ottoway and America had gone to the meadow, and Marjory was wishing she might join them at tossing the hay—such merry haymakers they were, saving poor Merit, whose doleful psalmody told her at what rate he was

swinging his scythe. Then she wandered away from them all through the gate so lately opened, and was thinking what life in the great world would be; and if their Hermitage neighbors would forget her and never make the promised visit; and if Phil would ever be anything but the homely-clad farmer he was; if he could ever be something more like Sir Victor. Then she was suddenly aware of strange voices beneath her window, and the sound of horses' feet and wheels, and there was the party from the Hermitage, Sir Victor helping the ladies to alight and lifting his hat as he looked up to her window, while Aunt Prissy hastened from the meadow in her broad hat to receive them, followed by coatless Phil.

Before Marjory entered the parlor, for America had detained her, insisting on her deciding if the black cake should be cut and passed with wine, the introductions were over, and Priscilla Ottoway and Phil had recovered from their surprise at hearing the name of Samuel Breckinridge, and had taken the hand of "Mars Sam," who assured them that the safety of the fugitives was not jeopardized by his discovery of them; that he would devise some way with

Miss Ottoway's co-operation for adjusting the matter without discord, etc., etc. And she, looking into his eyes, had believed him. He had apologized most gracefully for concealing his name from Miss Burke, but they could understand, he believed, why he had done so; and would Miss Ottoway permit his conveying the information of his true name to Miss Burke himself, and in his own way? She saw no reason for objecting, but Phil, who had growled something about "no union with slaveholders" and his readiness to die for the liberty of their servants, withdrew without ceremony and went back to the hay-field.

Priscilla Ottoway was entertaining them by telling how well they all knew "Mars Sam," and the pranks of his boyhood, when Marjory slipped quietly into the room and had exchanged her simple greetings with the ladies before Sir Victor, seemingly absorbed in a study of one of the old portraits, was aware of her entrance. She stood with demure expectancy waiting for him to see her, when, as if suddenly aware of her presence, he extended his hand toward her with a smile and led her to the porch where one of the dogs was lying, keeping a watchful

eye, however, upon the company inside. He thanked her for all of the Hermitage household for the wonderful crow they had been amusing themselves with that morning, and which they had decided to return with a petition for his full pardon for past crimes, so homesick he was, when three or four of the dogs came chasing each other around the house, and at a whistle from Phil went yelping to him in the meadow.

"Those dogs are old friends of mine—I mean their breed," said Sam Breckinridge watching her. He had observed her confusion when she would have addressed him by name, and her omitting to call him Sir Victor as on their first meeting. "I believe I can give you the names of those dogs, that is, the names your old black man has chosen for them. There must be a Dash among them; Fan, and only for the crow, there had been Poll-Betsey. Did he never name anything Uncle Joshua or"—they were looking each other straight in the eye, her own dilating, the color mounting to her very forehead—"or Mars Sam?"

"Are you Mars Sam?" under her breath, with long pauses between each word, drawing nearer, even laying her hand on his arm.

"I am Mars Sam," grasping her hand and holding it fast. "Never mind telling them, they all know it already," for Marjory would have gone to Aunt Prissy with the news; "all but those most interested in me, old Merit and America."

"Oh! Oh!" she was gasping, suddenly conscious of what the consequences of this meeting might be to them, "and they are your slaves—"

There was a deafening crash in the parlor. America had dropped her tray laden with wine glasses and decanters, and stood motionless above the wreck gazing at Sam Breckinridge with a stony, clairvoyant stare, her hands clinched, her nostrils dilating, the tiger gathering to spring. Merit, who was close behind her when the catastrophe came, and who had recognized his old master, was advancing by physical contortions, and with convulsive grimaces, nearer and nearer the porch, where Mars Sam, still holding Marjory's hand, was as calm as could be expected.

"Yes, old uncle, I'se Mars Sam," his voice breaking perceptibly as he bowed his head on the old man's shoulder for a moment, and then

quieted the tumultuous outburst of the fugitive as best he could. "I knew I should find you some day; that my best friend in all the world would be given me again. Don't be afraid of me, mammy," advancing to the glowering negress. "I shall do you no harm. Trust Master Sam and Miss Ottoway for that."

The words had their effect, but she was still an incarnation of defiance and resolve. She began picking up the debris mechanically, the fumes of the Burgundy filling the room.

"I know'd yer was comin'," Merit was blubbering, going round and round him like an overjoyed spaniel. "De Lawd 's been a tellin' me so moah dan a yeah, an' wukkin mirakuls dat beat ebery ting Moses eber see. Didn't Uncle Joswer's cane shoot right up out'er de groun' t'other day an' grow, an' grow, an' keep on growin' till it blossumed lilacks an' poseys? Den I know'd youse was comin'. Needn't tell ole Merit de wuld gwine ter bun up 'foah he'd seen Mars Sam! No moah runnin' aftah de Norf Stah for dis niggah! Miss Tisha did dat, but I ain't gwine back on Miss Tisha, cos, ye see, she led me up to Miss Prissy heah, and Miss Prissy she's bin keepin'

me from wearin' out, dat she has, and I'se been savin' mysef for Mars Sam. No wearin' out dis niggah! I'se wuth moah dan I was thirty yeahs ago, and Meriky heah—"

"Shet up dah 'bout Meriky."

"Miss Tisha's comin' too."

"Shet up dah 'bout Miss Tisha."

"Yes, Merit, you must keep clear of Miss Letitia," following him in his retreat from America's discipline. "You are not to let her know you are here, mind that," with a marked flavor of the old authority, and Merit bobbed his head with becoming deference. "Unless you keep this matter as secret as possible, I may not succeed in emancipating you, as I mean to do."

The old man started at the words. "Nevvah make a free niggah of me, Mars Sam. Don' ye do dat, an' I'se waitin' and prayin' for ye all dese yeahs. I'm a Buckinridge niggah, no free trash fur me, and I'se gwine to keep by Mars Sam."

America's conclusions were very different. Priscilla Ottoway and Miss Culbertson did their best at pouring the oil of consolation upon the troubled waters of her suspicion, but they

did not succeed in removing the conviction that she and Merit were in imminent peril of going back to Kentucky in chains.

"I'se no sech fool as ole Merit dar. I nebber forgits dem chillen, one sol' to Or'lens, nudder down ribber's no tellin' whar; ye don't heah me talkin' lub to dem Buckinridges. I knows 'em from cubs to bars, an' Mars Sam won't bar crossin'. He's Buckinridge, tooth an' nail. Don' I know 'em? High priced niggahs won't slip out of his paws for nothin'——Sink I'se gwine ter let Miss Prissy pay down de money? Don' talk 'bout de law. Wot's de law to us brack folks? De law sol' my chillen. I'se had all I wants of de law, an' de Buckinridges. Merit allers was a fool 'bout Mars Sam. He'd foller him off to-morrer, an' Miss Prissy an' Mars Phil an' Miss Annie an' Miss Margie couldn't hol' 'im. I'll hol' 'im," with increasing ferocity. "Nobody's gwine ter buy dat ole man but me. I'se gwine ter own him mysef. I'se got money nuff to start wid: I kin earn it in time. I'll borrer of Mars Phil."

"Well, mammy," said Sam soothingly, "you shall have him cheap."

He had better have kept silent.

"I don' want him cheap. I won't hab any cheap niggahs roun' heah. Merit is wuth fifteen hundred dollahs."

In proof of which the old man must show his teeth to prove his sound physical condition. Must bend his poor stiff knees to show that the rheumatism had left him with youthful elasticity. Her praise of Merit was unlimited. In fact she doubted if fifteen hundred dollars was enough for so valuable a farm hand and house servant. She could raise the money. Merit and she had a nest egg in the bank. They had speculated in calves and fox hound puppies, and some other specialties for years.

"We'll see whose massa roun' heah when I'se bought Merit, and 'foah Miss Prissy shall buy me, I'll—" shutting her lips close, and leaving the threat unexpressed.

America had not been the property of Samuel Breckinridge for several years before her escape. She had been sold to a neighboring plantation just before his leaving the country. His intention, now that the fugitives were discovered, was to write to her owner, an old friend, and

secure the promise of her freedom for a reasonable sum. As Sam Breckinridge had not a dollar of his own, the success of the scheme depended upon the plans he was discussing with Cousin Vic.

The exciting episode of the visit had gradually merged into pleasant conversation of commonplace matters, and wine and cake had been served without disaster, when the beauty of the grounds naturally led to a stroll through the meadow and orchard. Sam and Merit rambled apart and disappeared in the direction of the camp ground, while Victoria Barry and Marjory, who had left Cousin Beth and Miss Ottoway sitting upon the porch, made the circuit of the flower beds, and then, at Marjory's suggestion, followed the narrow pathway through the high grass, to the white paling around John Wilson's grave, Marjory laughing merrily at the story of the mocking bird and the explanation of what had been counted one of old Merit's pardonable deviations from exact truth.

An advanced corps of "the brethren" had been found by Sam Breckinridge at work on the camp ground, making ready for the arrival of the big tent. They were not so preoccupied as

to omit warning their visitor of the speedy end of his earthly probation. Sam listened with reticent amusement, accepting their tracts and papers innumerable, finally asking what attraction they offered a godless community in the way of eloquent preachers.

"Father Miller will be here himself without doubt, and Elder Himes. Never heard of Elder Himes? Why all Boston knows what a powerful speaker he is: the right hand of Father Miller, too much for the pro-slavery hypocrites he was in the London World Convention. But Sister Letitia Barkenstone, the Lord willing, will surely be here. And who is she? It must be you don't read the papers wherein the scoffers tell a dying world all our doings. Letitia Barkenstone is the chosen handmaiden of the Lord, raised up to proclaim the glad tidings to them who will not listen to the rough Elijahs of the wilderness. She is the Paula of these last days. She has cast her diamonds and her silken attire at the feet of the Lord's anointed, to make glad the desolate places before He comes to make up His jewels. She has sold her palaces and her chariots and given unto the treasury of the Lord."

"Who'd ebber taut dat of Miss Tisha?" old Merit was muttering, and evidently on the verge of an outburst of rapture. Sam promised to attend the meetings, and leading Merit away just as "the brother" was unrolling a chart for his edification, joined Marjory and Victoria Barry talking freely together as they leaned on the white palings around John Wilson's grave.

CHAPTER XIII.

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY.

NOT many days after the events of the preceding chapter the madame and her party arrived at the Hermitage, a party carefully selected by Dan VanHorn as an antidote for the apocalyptic visions of his dear mother, her somnambulistic mutterings about times, times, and dividing of times, Babylon's fall, and the cleansing of the sanctuary.

There was Kate McVicar, the mad-cap queen of a fashionable circle, Karl Saxsby, a rapidly rising artist, and Will Primrose, the poet of the hour.

"If you and Kate McVicar," Dan had said to Cousin Beth, "cannot cure mother of the effects of this delusion, nobody can."

The madame's appearance was by no means indicative of spiritual or mental disquiet. Her tall, graceful figure was faultlessly attired, or had been, had the madame been twenty years

younger, requiring less aid from rouge, hair dye and every artifice intended to reconcile a fading beauty with the inexorable ravages of the years. She clung to her idolizing husband as if she were his petted child, or as if they were acting a pretty comedy, with Cousin Beth for faithful nurse. The apocalyptic visions lost their terrors in less than twenty-four hours, and the madame was all absorbed in Karl Saxsby's proposed sketch book of the Genesee Valley, and Will Primrose's madrigals.

She would be a toiler with the rest. She would write a simple story for the poor children of her mission school. What an eventful summer it would be after all. "Poor Sam Breckinridge," she sighed, wishing she might see him restored to the favor of Letitia Barkenstone, "and he must be; but she should never consent, never, to Letitia Barkenstone's coming to them as a guest from that camp meeting. She would arrange matters for Sam, somehow, but to burden her family life with the eccentricities of a Millerite preacher was out of the question."

The Genesee Valley was far from being the social Sahara she had imagined. Among its

extensive landowners were many old Maryland families living in something akin to baronial style, while not a few gentlemen of New York and Philadelphia had country seats thereabout. In less than a fortnight the Hermitage had ceased to be a hermitage in any sense, and the round of visits and excursions so absorbed the time of all that Marjory had at last wearily reached the belief that nothing would come of her new acquaintance after all. The day she had called at the Hermitage with her aunt, there had been no one at home to receive them, and after that disappointment Marjory wearied of expecting to see more of her whilom friends. Her musings when day after day closed, after its undeviating routine of commonplace, were morbid, even resentful. Old Merit, for he did not tell her of several secret meetings with his old master, she thought forgotten with them all.

The camp meeting had been an additional disappointment. Such a thing as an ascension robe was not to be seen, the brethren denied that one had ever been owned by a sane believer, and the preaching so far had been exposition of prophecy by calm speakers, that had

failed to attract a crowd. The meetings were a prelude only, she was told, to what might be expected when Letitia Barkenstone should arrive, she having been delayed by the great demands upon her in Boston and New York. Perhaps old America was right after all.

"If dere's anythin' in all dis' yeah it's de debbil, an' de debbil is gwine to let us 'lone if we stop foolishin' with folks as hasn't nuffin' to do but preach an' bress de Lawd. I want such folks to keep off'n dis groun'. Dar's Miss Annie dar, an' her preachah, an' didn't dat howlin' preachah de odder night set all dis trubble gwine 'bout Mars Sam and Miss Tisha? Dey's no count. I'se no use for sech trash, an' if you don't go runnin' affer dem, an' coaxin' 'em like old Merit dar, ye'll nebber see 'em agen. What good's Miss Tisha an' Mars Sam bin to us since we kum heah? Hab we needed 'em roun'? I'se tells ye, Miss Margie, it's all de debbil, an' if yes won't hab nuffin' to do wid de debbil he'll clar out mighty quick."

Marjory, half converted to America's teaching, tried to forget what gave her pleasure no longer. Another gate, out into the world far away from the old house in the valley, seemed opening,

and when once beyond the seclusion growing more and more like a prison house, would she ever be contented with such a quiet life again? Aunt Prissy had been inclined to place her in one of the Friends' Boarding Schools in the suburbs of Philadelphia, but she was averse to anything so tranquillizing, so monotonously drab.

She sat by the open window of her mother's chamber, just as she had sat every afternoon for a fortnight, and might be sitting, she sometimes thought, for years to come, if circumstances did not break the monotony of her life. Looking off across the meadows, at the white paling beyond the wheat, she re-lived her visit to the Hermitage, and all that had happened. Was it years ago since Mars Sam became a reality in her uneventful life? How vividly she recalled every word, look, and inflection of his mellow, low keyed voice. Then she remembered—how strange she had forgotten it until that moment—the little book he had dropped as he took his seat in the wagon, one of those that had been given him at the camp ground. She had laid it carefully away, hidden it in fact. Now was the time to read it—"The

Dream of Father Miller"—it would serve as a lullaby for her mother's heavy lidded eyes. She soon forgot herself and her surroundings in the old man's description of the day of doom. Her mother's soft breathing alone broke the silence in which she read. She beheld a globe reeling to destruction, the stars hurled from the heavens, the children of men crying in vain unto the Judge, descending, attended by a retinue of angels and archangels. The graves gave up their dead, the lightning shrivelled the fair bosom of the earth, within which terrified ghosts so long had slept for this horrible awaking. In what an awful silence she read on, a paralysis of fear creeping over her, a conviction that the homely writer was a true seer, and that his fearful predictions were speedily to come to pass. How horrible to be linked to a world that might not escape such a fate! What a merciless trap for humanity, what an inexorable grasp was this hand of the Lord, what a relentless monster the Maker of the Universe! She looked out over the wide landscape, so fair a moment before, to behold it horribly transformed. The shadow of its impending doom lay black upon it. It shrivelled with flame, it

melted with fervent heat. The great elms fell crackling into yawning chasms, the birds dropped dead, the river bed was molten fire. "Phil!" she called out shrilly, the cry of a frightened child.

A merry laugh came up from beneath the window, a chorus of happy voices. Bewildered and dumb she stood gazing straight into the face of Sam Breckinridge. Two carriages of ladies and gentlemen all looked up at her, and smiled. Would they, could they, be so happy, passed through her perturbed mind as she hastened down, if they knew what the end of it all was to be? How strange that the world should go on just the same as if it were not nearing the last day. Her seriousness wore off gradually, however, and the visit which Mrs. Wardell had intended should be one of ceremony was more like a rural frolic, in which even Priscilla Ottoway took part; for after tea had been passed, as they sat on the lawn, America resplendent in her hoop earrings and brightest head gear, Marjory must lead them over the quaint old house, even to the ridge pole of the roof, and show them the turret of the Hermitage peeping through the trees. Will

Primrose saw no end of madrigals, and Karl Saxsby declared the plan for his sketch book essentially changed. Then Victoria Barry played a Virginia reel on the jangling old piano, and Kate McVicar arranged the dancers on the wide lawn, insisting that old Merit and America should do their part.

"Dat Mars Sam is jes' as peart as ebber he was," she heard Merit half soliloquizing as she passed down the line with her partner. If the dream came back to her, as it dolorously did at times for all her gaiety, it was with a sense of thankfulness that something was helping her to forget it all. One would have thought Phil had been reading it, so solemn he looked in his best coat, which, by the way, Marjory discovered that afternoon was quite out of fashion, and dreadfully short in the sleeves. She believed she liked him better in his workaday dress. She would never make him unhappy again by forcing him into what he never wore of his own free will, but he need not look so sullen. That did not improve his appearance.

Mrs. Wardell's desire that Karl Saxsby should make certain sketches of the old house and its surroundings, to be accompanied in

time by madrigals by Will Primrose, prolonged the stay of the party far beyond her expectation. They were watching the sun setting, Marjory in the window above them, that of her mother's room, whither she had gone lest she should be missed by the invalid, when Phil, who had been sitting with her, found it necessary to look after his farm hands in a distant field. She sat leaning upon the window ledge, her bright girlish face against the background of her crimson curtain, the picture framed by the gnarled boughs of the old oak, on the lower branches of which Jocko was stepping about with ruffled plumage, haughtily disdaining to exhibit his familiarity with Shakespeare, by croaking querulously at Victoria Barry's efforts to call him out.

Priscilla Ottoway and Elizabeth Culbertson were a little apart from the rest. They had been speaking of Letitia Barkenstone, and the influence of the prevailing fanaticism, the stress laid upon astronomical phenomena of any kind by the public prints, a few of the leading journals giving a special column to "Signs and Wonders in the Heavens."

"Millerism is a spiritual fermentation," Miss

Culbertson was saying, "and spiritual fermentation, I believe," smiling at the amused incredulity plainly manifested in the face of her listener, "takes place in many ways, in the heavens as well as upon the earth, false interpretations of the word, for the ultimate purification of our faith and our understanding of spiritual interpretation. Millerism will result in a clearer comprehension of the prophecies relating to the Second Coming."

"But how can you have faith in a system so dependent upon falsities for its development?"

The singing from the camp ground burst out tumultuously, the volume of voices increasing with the rhythmical roaring wail of the chorus.

"I want a religion that shall dispel illusions," continued Priscilla Ottaway, "not absorb them; that shall break down dogmatism, not build upon it; that shall give me real knowledge, not evolutions of my ignorance and mistakes."

"You demand a revelation," Priscilla Ottoway alone could hear Elizabeth Culbertson's low sweet voice, "a faith born of something above and beyond the result of logical connec-

tion—something that does not depend upon your ability to formulate it in a syllogism."

Kate McVicar was begging them all to go down to the camp ground. She had Miss Culbertson by both hands and was playfully attempting to drag her from her chair. "I must see a genuine camp meeting. Such guys as the women do make of themselves. Oh we must go. Mrs. Wardell don't care a fig about it. She'll stay here with Cousin Vic, who doesn't want to go. Come, Dan," for he had not stirred from the great bear skin upon which he was reclining. "Come, we must get up something mediæval in the way of an ascension robe."

Dan shook his head—a solemn refusal.

"I wish you would go with us," came up pleadingly to Marjory from under her window.

She had been listening to nothing but the singing, catching the refrain, heralding in words she could hear distinctly, that impending day of doom she had wished to forget. His voice startled her. She drew back with a low cry.

"Thank you, Mr. Breckinridge, but I cannot go. Indeed I do not want to go. I would not go for anything."

He waved her a smiling adieu, after a moment's indecision, and turning abruptly upon his heel, gravitated with the rest to the bear skin where Karl Saxsby was exhibiting the sketches he had made.

"We can have a camp meeting of our own," Kate McVicar was chirping, and she began singing—

> "I'm going, I'm going, I'm on my journey home,
> I'm travelling to a city just in sight."

"Well if it's really in sight," broke in Victoria Barry, "we can see it here as well as from slivery seats without backs. We haven't the charts, that's a drawback, but we can elucidate from our memories, which no doubt will be more entertaining. Sit down here, Sam," cushioning the tree behind him with a sofa pillow, "you are under my medical care. I must remember, if you don't."

"Old Merit is right. He says I'm 'jes as much of a pickaninny as ebber.' Come, Dan, let's have a game of mumble peg."

"No, we are playing camp meeting. Dan is expected to preach." There was a clapping of hands, Dan languidly conscious of being the centre of attraction.

"Yes, Dan," from Sam Breckinridge, "I want you to appreciate my giving up Elder Stiggins to listen to the future Rector of St. John's in the wilderness. Where was it we left off the other night, or was it at breakfast this morning, when some petty consideration, ordering a cork screw from Rochester or something of the sort, prevented the settlement of a matter concerning the whole universe. Where did we leave off?" appealing to Victoria Barry. "If you cannot tell them we must begin over again."

"Why I was asking, if it could be proved that the teaching of the early church differed essentially from that of these fanatics, concerning the doctrine of the Second Coming?"

"Fanaticism was not born with William Miller," Dan said quietly.

"Verily," from Victoria Barry, gladly prodding him on, "these fanatics are true Restorationists, are they not? Restoring the relics of ancient doctrine. As such they should be hailed as the benefactors of Christendom. History tells us, and by history I mean trustworthy authority, that the early Christians lived in constant expectation of the return of

Jesus the Christ ; that they went to their beds each night believing He might come before the morning. Every to-morrow was to them a possible last day. The margin given by these Millerites, when they fix upon the twenty-fourth day of October, the date given by their system of literal interpretation, this heritage of the early church, is a pleasanter arrangement for the delaying sinner. He knows just when his probation ends. 'Behold I come quickly,' in short, meant something more even to the early church than to these fanatics. It would to me. I should find it more comfortable to believe that the great conflagration would not break out until next October, rather than that we might never get back to the Hermitage and see dear Doctor Wardell again. Your Advent hymns have the same meaning as those sung by these Millerites. They have sensibly adopted many of yours, particularly this one, which has some impressiveness when uplifted by expectant believers : " and she solemnly sang, in her strong contralto, Kate McVicar taking up the soprano, Dan's tenor falling in with the melancholy refrain,

" Lo ! He comes with clouds descending."

"Cheerful, isn't it?" and Sam looked up to the window nodding to Marjory who was eagerly listening.

"Now tell me, Dan, if it were possible to translate you and Father Miller back to the dens and caves of the early church, which, think you, would be in the more perfect fellowship with those looking for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ?"

"It's hard having history and the thermometer both to contend with," sighed Sam Breckinridge, wiping his brow, and regarding Dan with amused expectancy.

"Father Miller is born out of his time," drawled Karl Saxsby without looking up from his sketch book. "Unless he can contribute something to save us from the repulsive realism of to-day, inspire a renaissance, the sooner he 'goes up' the better. We are too commonplace already."

Victoria Barry turned upon him incisively.

"Thou scoffer of the genuine and the real, is not faith a fact? What change would you inspire in genuine belief?"

"What is belief?" squinting his eyelids to a

straight line, and regarding her as he would a vague subject for his pencil.

"The affirmation of the soul."

Dan nodded assent.

"Your approval of the definition, Dan, betrays your heresy," quickly retorted Victoria Barry. "Do you admit that there is any authority above the church in matters of faith. No. Of course not. Oh, foolish Tractarian, what hath bewitched you that you did not foresee that affirmations of the soul, if at variance with the authority of the church, are a delusion and a snare?"

"Of course we must submit to the authority of the church in matters of faith."

"But if authority does not abide by its decisions, if its teachings to-day are contradictory to its teachings to-morrow, what then?"

"The truth is the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever."

"Let all the people say amen, but not without a perception of the distinction between the truth and orthodox doctrines. But as I understand you, it is what the church permits to be taught; the doctrines it plainly upholds, that you are ready to accept as truth?"

Dan nodded assent.

"How was it at the close of the tenth century, the end of the memorable year of our Lord, nine hundred and ninety-nine? There we have an illustration of faith in the literal Second Coming, as taught by the church without question, and accepted throughout Christendom."

"What came to pass in those days?" asked Sam.

"Study your history, my child. Don't you remember how that century went out under the fearful pall cast over it by all Christendom, the belief that the prophecy concerning the binding of the devil for one thousand years was to be fulfilled within that year? The pulpits of the infallible church had been teaching that literal interpretation of the apocalyptic text for a generation and more. There were no great stone cathedrals until that day went by. Kings laid down their crowns, and harvests were unsown in anticipation of the end of the world."

"Repeat the prophecy for us," said Sam.

Cousin Beth slowly repeated the text.

"And I saw an angel come down from Heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit

and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season."

A hush followed the recitation. Victoria Barry was the first to speak.

"Only think what the Christian world would be like to-day if Christians were looking for the end of all things as they were in nine hundred and ninety-nine. The scoffer then was outside of the pale of holy church, as far removed as we are to-night from the Millerite camp meeting."

"Those times ought to contribute great subjects to art," said Karl Saxsby.

"The story of the abbot of St. Vanne gives you one," said Elizabeth Culbertson. "As the day of doom drew nearer, intense efforts were made to appease the wrath of Heaven; kings and emperors begged for admittance at monastery doors. Henry of Germany finally succeeded in being admitted as a monk by the

gentle abbot of St. Vanne, who had tried to convince him that his duty was in remaining upon his throne.

"'Sire,' said the abbot, 'since you are now under my orders, and have sworn to obey me, go forth and fulfill the duties of the state to which God has called you. Go forth a monk of the abbey of St. Vanne, but emperor of the West.'"

"We get a fair idea of the realism of the mediæval church in the paintings of its artists," said Karl Saxsby. "Would any congregation of to-day tolerate above its altar, no matter how perfect drawing and coloring might be, sinners boiling in dinner pots like legs of mutton, the devil tossing the damned from one pit to another with fiery forks, the Judge looking on serenely? The faith of those days, its perceptions of spiritual things, is shown in its illustration by art."

"The Nuremberg Chronicles, for instance," said Victoria Barry; "isn't it there we find a man rising from the grave with a wooden leg?"

"Pity to check such development as there has been since those days, by burning up every-

thing as a failure;" and Karl Saxsby shut up his note book, Mrs. Wardell claiming it immediately for closer study. Her interest in the conversation had been very slight. "There is comfort in what Lessing says,—'Who knows whether there will not come a new eternal gospel, which will be to Christianity what Christianity was to Judaism—a third stage in the long education of mankind by God, for whom the shortest line is not a straight one?'".

The symposium came to an abrupt end at this point, for the carriages had been brought up and Mrs. Wardell rose and began taking leave. Marjory came down, and Phil reappeared, and they were waiting for Elizabeth Culbertson who had followed Priscilla Ottoway into the house, when Kate McVicar suddenly remembered what she had come so very near forgetting to tell Marjory, that there was to be a Dickens masquerade at the Hermitage within a fortnight, and she must come, yes, they must all come—with a beaming smile for Phil—without fail.

"Let us see much of each other while time shall last," was Victoria Barry's farewell; and the carriage drove away and Marjory stood in

the twilight listening to the sound of their voices. Then the mournful singing came up again from the camp ground, and the spectre of terror that had haunted her all the afternoon crept nearer and nearer in the gathering darkness.

How Phil startled her!

"Come, Marjory, now for a lark. I have a bag of mice here; such a time as I have had for a week, catching them; and here"—holding another wriggling bag far behind him at arms-length—"is a snake or two. If you want some fun, something to make you forget all this nonsense you have been hearing, just come down to the camp ground. I can get into the big tree just over where the women sit, and when I drop one of these snakes—"

"No, Phil!" petulantly and decisively; and she hurried away from him and went to her own room and closed the door for the night. Disgusted with life, he found a questionable kind of pleasure in submerging his bags in the creek, vowing he would never try to please Marjory again. Then he satisfied himself that she was not sitting by her window listening to the grand "hullaboolo," as he called it, down on the camp ground.

"She's thinking about the masquerade, of course, and Sir Victor. If there ever was an imp on this ground, it's that devilish Poll-Betsey."

Marjory was lying awake listening to the shouting of the fanatics and re-living that horrible dream, when she was not trying, most ineffectually, to concentrate her thoughts upon the masquerade. It was near midnight when she crept to the window and looked up to the starry heavens as into a hard, inexorable face pronouncing her merciless doom.

"If it must be, why should we know it is coming? What happiness can there be in a world, with a God like that?"

CHAPTER XIV.

AT THE DOOR.

PRISCILLA OTTOWAY had not outlived her love of a secluded life, of rigid self exile from the social world. Contentment with her seclusion, thankfulness for it, was the basis of her serene satisfaction. She did not forget that her peaceful exile had been the source of her soul's healing. She had no yearning for the world she had forsaken. She would keep watchful eye lest it crept within the refuge consecrated to her by her resurrection from sorrow. Without regretting that she had been thwarted in her intention to live alone in the old house with a faithful servant or two, she never admitted that the contentment she had found in the companionship of Phil and Marjory was more perfect than it would have been, had destiny never guided their feet to her threshold. Her relations to each of them, particularly Marjory, had been peculiarly tender, and

yet she knew, and they knew, that the sphere of her isolation—her inner world—was separate from theirs, as she meant their individual happiness should be from hers. They should go from her when they would and as they would. She had enough to do in bringing about a harmonious conformity to fate in her own life, without being a law, a fate for them. Phil would never leave her. The quiet of the old house was in tune with his temperament. But Marjory—the pang was hard to suppress—would fly away speedily; she was already trying her restless wings.

Nor did she regret the invasion of her seclusion by her gay neighbors. It would give her needed assistance in devising and carrying out plans for Marjory, from whom her thoughts were never absent. She was studying her fancies, her inherited tastes, the unfulfilled prophecy of her life. Confidence was ripening between them, a new thing, for dearly as the girl loved her Aunt Prissy she was slow in forgetting the hidden law of separation, the undefined wall of reserve between them, which had overcast her childhood, chilling her when as a child she had been silenced, and that not by

words, in her questionings about her father. The appearance of "Mars Sam," and its effect on the fortunes of the fugitives, had given Priscilla Ottoway little or no uneasiness. She had confidence in Samuel Breckinridge. She could pay for the freedom of the slaves if she would, a thing she did not mean to do unless under pressure. Her soul revolted against such concession to slavery; and then it would cripple her considerably, interfering with plans for the future of Marjory. Phil was gloomy with forebodings of what was coming to pass, and America did much muttering to herself. The two kept sharp watch upon Sam Breckinridge, and old Merit too, for that matter; but the former seemed likely to forget his promises of a happy settlement in the absorbing gaieties of the Hermitage. He had about made up his mind that he should not meet Letitia Barkenstone unless he went in search of her—followed her from city to city, as the multitude of believers were doing, leaving a little flock to stand guard at the big tent on the camp ground and wait for her arrival. His letter to her had ensured him a daily mail of "Advent" publications, and in those he could read of her eloquence and wonderful

power in plucking brands from the burning; but her appointments were not announced. She left her to-morrows to the promptings of the spirit, a most vexatious trial to those responsible for the big tent, and the expectation of the curious folk up the valley. Nor did he get satisfactory letters from Kentucky concerning America. Her owner asked an exorbitant price for her, and seemed disposed to teach thieving Garrisonians a thing or two. Sam's gift of diplomacy would be exercised to the utmost before the matter was ended, and Cousin Vic declared he knew nothing about diplomacy, while Letitia Barkenstone was a consummate diplomatist. Happily for Marjory, whose morbidly inclined musings when by herself would lead her to read and re-read the terrible dream, musings she never made known to Aunt Prissy or Phil, she was included in the party which drove away from the Hermitage not many days after Mrs. Wardell's visit to Barley Flats for a trip around some of the charming little lakes of the neighborhood. The nearest duplicate of an English coach the country afforded was found, after not a little search; and Marjory, perched on an outside seat beside Victoria

Barry, her brown cheeks flushed with excitement, had never seen Phil watching them from the shadow of the covered bridge when they drove away. It was quite as well she did not, for he had seen little but Sam Breckinridge, and Sam that very moment was telling her what Phil, of course, could not hear—how they would dismiss the driver at the village, and he and she would drive the four-in-hand themselves. Then Sam blew the horn cheerily, and the wondering farm-folk stared, the children ran out to the middle of the road to gaze after them, Doctor Wardell bowing to everybody, and Kate McVicar describing everything in detail to the madame, who could see nothing for her two thick veils. It was needless for any of the party to have a care for anything, for Dan Van Horn had assumed the care of them all and their belongings, and made the whims of each his study.

A week of perfect weather, of leisurely driving through picturesque farm land, bending orchards, and vistas of forest-primeval; good horses, good company, good cheer, camping on lonely beaches, dipping oars in silent waters, dancing in the wide parlors of the hospitable

houses along the way, song and laughter, "Oh, what a joyous world it is!" thought Marjory, "and how sweet the enjoying of it all with those whose lives are full of joy!" The least she could do, she thought, for those at home, was to send them a letter, and so the Sunday they spent at Crooked Lake, near Jemima Wilkinson's house, she wrote to her Aunt Prissy:

"Here we are for the Sabbath; for Dr. Wardell will not hear of our going on to-day, anxious as we all are to reach the shores of Seneca. They seem much interested in Jemima Wilkinson. She lived here some fifty years ago—was the head of one of the first and largest settlements in the Genesee country. Think of forty families going into the woods to live with such a queer woman, to make her their leader in everything! They believed she had been raised up from the dead, that she died once, and that then Jesus Christ 'made habitation of her body'—whatever that means. Only think of believing such nonsense! And that she could raise the dead, and heal the sick, and walk on the water, if she were a mind to try—only she never did. I hear so much about Jesus the Christ, and I know so little about Him, I asked Cousin Beth,

for she will have me call her so, to tell me the true story. And how can they say one like Him will come back to the world to burn it up, and will save only those who happen to believe something the rest know nothing about? I am glad we don't trouble ourselves with such things at Barley Flats, only old Merit. I must thank him for the most I know about them. For all my little talk with Cousin Beth this morning, and the long sermon Mr. Van Horn read to us afterwards, and the hymns and the prayers—should I have knelt? I did not—I couldn't understand any better than before some things I would rather talk with you about than with any one else. So many stories I have to tell you about this Jemima Wilkinson, 'the Universal Friend,' and how my tongue slipped in speaking of her; and I called her Letitia Barkenstone—they all laughed; and the doctor said they were not so very different, and that did not please Mr. Breckinridge. I like to hear him talk as he does, when I am driving and he is smoking his cigar. Then Mr. Breckinridge tells me so much about the old plantation, and gives his side of Merit's old stories. He seems a great deal older to me than he did at first,

and different in many ways. He is not well, and Cousin Vic takes care of him, carries his cough medicine in her bag, and doses him when she thinks best. My Sir Victor has turned into somebody as unlike what Phil thinks I was looking for in a knight, as possible. I believe Mr. Breckinridge thinks I am nothing but a big little girl. Mrs. Wardell nearly fainted the other day when she heard I was holding the reins during a little trouble we had with the horses in going down a steep hill; coming out all right of course. 'That child Marjory' she calls me, which, with Mr. Breckinridge's 'Marjory, child,' has set me thinking about letting my hair grow long. Perhaps a braid instead of these boyish locks would make them realize that I am nearly sixteen. Only for the masquerade we should not turn about at Seneca Lake, but should go on, and on; for every day of this life seems happier than the one before. I wish you could see the doctor when we strike a trout stream, and Will Primrose, who insists on being cook when we camp out, and lets us starve while he is studying the cook book or watching the frying-pan, open cook book in hand. Don't tell Merit that Mr. Breckinridge

talks of going to Europe this fall; Cousin Vic says all that depends upon the result of his influence upon Letitia Barkenstone. Don't you half wish Merit and America were safe in Canada? This letter rambles like the route we are following. Tell Phil to take Nan to the head of Conesus Lake by Saturday morning, and we will have a gallop home together. Why wouldn't Phil make a good bandit for the masquerade? We must think of something for him. That will be his first glimpse of this new world I like so much."

The Abbess of St. Vanne and Daniel Boone did not go to the masquerade in company. In fact, the abbess was in ignorance of the departure of the pioneer from the house when her toilet was receiving a few last touches from Aunt Prissy's painstaking hands, and America, swelling with pride, stood waiting to go with her, Merit having sat upon the box at the door, bolt upright, for a half hour.

"And now where is Phil? Don't he even care to see me before I go?" and Marjory walked slowly up and down before the glass, wondering if the tall woman in the serge habit, her great dark eyes transfixing her with their

surprised gaze from beneath the snowy coronet, could be really herself. How old she looked! that made her gasp; how brown and plump for a nun!—at which she laughed, the merry abbess, as she slipped her beads through untrained fingers. But where was Phil?

America called his name shrilly from every door, and it was well she did not see old Merit grin and chuckle.

"Never mind Phil," said Priscilla Ottoway; and her quiet smile would have betrayed her secret, but Marjory's eyes were studying the abbess. "Phil is Phil."

"Yes, Phil is Phil," a sweet tremulousness in her petulant voice, as she kissed her aunt and took her seat in the carriage. "I thought at the last minute he would come down ready to go. He seems bent on seeing nothing but the work-aday side of life."

"Some folks," America was soliloquizing as she jerked the reins out of Merit's hands, "was born to allus split wood with a hammah."

Mrs. Leo Hunter as Minerva, assisted by the philosophical Pickwick and the club, received her guests with languorous grace, and Marjory, leaning upon Cousin Beth's arm, passed on

through the fantastically dressed crowd, troubadours, harlequins, mendicants; Dickens's characters predominating, until they found Mrs. Jarley, a little woman in a very big bonnet and a very red shawl, in whose special charge the Abbess of St. Vanne was placed.

"I hope the abbess is not low in her feelings to-night, as many of these rollickers seem to be in truth. It must be the open air 'wagrancy' of the show. Ah! here is the Cardinal Richelieu. He is looking among the gypsy girls for some one I could not find for him if I would." The pompous ecclesiastic, with his white moustache, made reverential obeisance to the abbess, who silently inclined her head.

"Now my dears—"chirpingly from Mrs. Jarley—"I must leave you alone, while I look after the diffuseness of the show; my spirits make a little ease absolutely necessary. Here we go"—and before the abbess could detain her, the cardinal was congratulating her on her disguise, her beautiful costume; and did she know that Phil was in the crowd? she should discover him for herself. That was easy enough, with Daniel Boone striding across the lawn before her, a rough-looking fellow with gun and

game, General Baker's moth-eaten yellow waistcoat under John Wilson's fur skin coat. But there was no attracting his attention; he had no interest in sombre impersonations like hers, evidently, and before she could reach him he had disappeared. The band struck up a waltz, and the cardinal and the abbess rambled away through the fairy-like scene, he taking pains to show her the most striking costumes and charming effects of moonlight shadows and gay festoons.

It was an oppressively hot night. The foliage and the grass were sere and crisp with the long drought. The leaves hung motionless, suggesting nature's breathless expectancy; the full moon seemed pallid with waiting for a break in the tropical calm. The wheat-fields were fully ripe. If the prayers of the valley farmers had hearing, the rain would not come, now it had delayed so long, until the harvest was garnered. The masks of the revellers were intolerable and some discarded their superfluities of costume. Near midnight black threatening clouds came up in the west, and the weather prophets advised those who objected to a wetting to make timely departure. But

dance and song went on, the dancers under the wide pavilion caring less and less for the far off lightning and low rumbling thunder. Merit was uneasy. Unless Marjory wanted to be drown*ded* and the carriage upsot and Miss Prissy skeer*red* to death, they must be gwine home. But Merit, alas, was an unhonored prophet with Marjory.

"It's a pow'ful ways we'se got to go, Miss Margie, an' dat off hoss—"

A sudden outburst of singing, a strong tumultuous rhapsody of uncultivated voices, broke in at that moment, swelling louder and louder, something so foreign, mysterious and exciting, that in a brief space of time Marjory on Sam Breckinridge's arm was pressing forward with all the rest to the musicians' stand whence the singing proceeded.

"It is some of Kate McVicar's doings, most likely," was Sam's explanation; "the grand finale."

The singers had not been seen on the grounds before, that was a certainty. Slowly, very slowly, and with widely different effect it dawned upon the conviction of the revellers at last who the singers were, those plainly dressed

men and women, hymn books in hand, their rapt faces upturned to the moon as they wailed verse after verse of prosaic doggerel, the characteristic hosannah of the fanaticism; beginning with,

"You will see your Lord a coming
You will see your Lord a coming
You will see your Lord a coming
To the old church-yard.

While the band of music
While the band of music
While the band of music
Shall be sounding through the air."

It has been said that in the singing of the Millerites was their mighty power. They illustrated the power of their singing on this occasion, thrilling their hearers with a strange awe, which the grotesqueness of the singers, and the absurdity of what was sung did not greatly lessen. One was a tremendous basso, supplemented by a shrieking soprano, a dwarfish woman under his elbow, whose mouth seemed hopelessly extended with proclaiming the Midnight Cry. The alto was a comely matron but for her barbarously cut hair, chopped squarely off from ear to ear. Her

long thin neck was unrelieved by collar or ribbon, her ugly calico skirt was scant and short as possible. She bit off the words she sang with a vicious snap, her hungry eyes trailing over the upturned faces as if separating sheep from goats. Shrinking behind her was a lank boyish figure, the typical Franciscan of every fanaticism, minus the cowl and serge. His shrill untrained tenor soared high and free. By the time the singers had reached the verse, particularly addressed, as was the whole hymn for that matter, to the poor sinner—

"You will flee to rocks and mountains—"

Marjory was trembling like a leaf.

"You must go, child," Sam Breckinridge reiterated, gently striving to lead her to the house, when their feet were stayed by the appearance upon the platform of a woman who emerged suddenly from behind the singers, a tall queenly form, advancing into the full moonlight. She stood composedly in the expectant silence, her calm eyes surveying the scene with the far away look of an inspired seer. She was looking down from a height scorn and derision might not reach. The gulf between her and the grovellers of a fleshly world might only be

spanned by divine compassion. She was not of those senseless revellers, bedecked with gauds and jewels, and woe be unto her, an everlasting woe, if she blew not the trumpet in their desolate places, and made them to hear the gospel of deliverance. The gulf between her and the revellers was not wider than that between her and the singers, her body guard seemingly, whose defiant uncertainty as to whether they should be permitted a full hearing or not disappeared as soon as she was fairly before the eyes of the "scoffers." Who had looked for such a woman in a Millerite preacher? A firmly posed head, its coil of iron gray hair encircling it like a coronet, her quakerish dress of gray satin made by no unskilled modiste. A whisper passed through the crowd, which Marjory did not need to catch first from Sam Breckinridge, to know who the beautiful woman was—Letitia Barkenstone.

"Behold He cometh!"

Only one *believing* all that Letitia Barkenstone did, when she gave utterance to those words in her wondrously clear, strong and sustained voice, her finger pointing to the blackening heavens, could have made the message seem

so like a voice from heaven, the voice preceding the archangel and the trump of God—"Behold the Bridegroom cometh!" her voice ascending in its marvellous compass and descending to the depths of its melancholy sweetness. "He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him. The kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. The grand drama is begun. The God of Heaven hath numbered the kingdoms and now He breaks them in pieces as a potter's vessel. Babylon is fallen! The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom and possess it even for ever and ever! The Judge of the earth is at the door!"

"Prove it," from a voice in the background.

"I speak that which I do know," without turning her eyes towards the speaker. "He has given us to know His times and seasons in His blessed word. How do I know He cometh, and that He cometh quickly? When ye see these things know that He is nigh even at the door. We have seen the signs of His coming. The world has seen them. Those signs are each and all fulfilled. We may calculate the prophetic periods on the scale of time, the calculation

of two thousand and three hundred days ends with 1843. The seventy weeks ends with 1843. I am assuming that you are Bible students. If you are not, begin that study before it is too late, if this night or to-morrow does not end your probation. Come to the camp ground and see those calculations upon the chart: the sixth trumpet ending with 1843, the times, times and a half, the seven times, the 1290 days, and Israel's captivity. 1843 Jewish time is 1844 Roman time. Our ignorance of that fact in our first study of the subject has given us the tarrying time foretold. That tarrying time was permitted for your souls' salvation. Rise, rise, from the sleep of death! Woe to them that sleep! Woe to them that dance! Woe, Woe! Woe!"

Marjory was faint with excitement, nor was she the only one affected by the preacher. Women were sobbing, and their escorts hurrying them from the spot! The minority only of those who lingered scoffed openly and expressed their views of the unwarranted intrusion. Cousin Beth had managed to prevent Mrs. Wardell from knowing what was taking place, but the doctor, upon hearing of it, made speedy descent upon Cousin Letitia, and the

droll appearance of that plump rubicund old gentleman as Pickwick upon the scene, his circular spectacles on his bald crown, his note books dropping behind him, brought a sudden reaction of feeling.

"Be silent, Cousin Letitia," and she tranquilly obeyed, outreaching her hand for an embarrassed greeting. "I haven't heard a word, you know, and am glad I can't, but those damnable doctrines shall not be preached on my grounds. Send off these—" stopping short, however, in his confused survey of her attendants, who were getting ready to sing. "Come to the house and behave like a Christian. Sam is here, you know. There's no use in your talking to a deaf man," and Doctor Wardell flourished his ear trumpet. "I'm an old fashioned Episcopalian, and will risk my chance with the old ship. No new lights for me, Cousin Letitia. Here's Sam, good fellow as ever lived, don't know what we would have done without him this summer. That's right—" when brother and sister kissed each other, his voice trembling a little as he added for their ears alone, "You can't go up, Letitia, until you straighten out some things with your own mother's son."

CHAPTER XV.

ASHES OF ROSES.

"IS your soul at peace with your God, my child?" Letitia Barkenstone had asked of Marjory, pressing the girl's trembling hand between both her own, and searching her soul with her penetrating eyes. "Have you found your God?"

Marjory could not answer and Cousin Beth drew her away.

It was doubtful if she could reach home before the breaking of the storm, unless she started at once.

"How cold your hands are, my child," Cousin Beth had followed her to the dressing-room; "I wish you might stay with us to-night, and so you should if the house were not overflowing. Merit says your carriage is as snug as can be, and that the horses are safe. Good-night to the Abbess of St. Vanne," kissing her, "she is tired of the gay world, I see."

Marjory turned back, she had forgotten her bouquet, one Mr. Breckinridge had given her, and finding it she hid it under her light wrap. She thanked Cousin Beth for a charming evening, and promised in a mechanical, absent way to come to the Hermitage very soon. In the crush of carriages detaining them for a moment, she saw Samuel Breckinridge drive away with Letitia Barkenstone. Then Merit made fast the curtains, and they were soon on the highway, the horses leaping at the deafening thunder, the rain pouring down in torrents.

America was on the box, reins in hand, Merit curled down behind her broad shoulders praying with all his might.

"We'se nebber gwine ter see de mawnin', Meriky. He's sendin' down de fiah an' de brimstun, fer shuah. Miss Tisha she know'd, she tol' us, she said it was cumin', an' now Mars Sam is gwine ter de camp groun', to go up 'long wid her. Le' me out, Meriky," clutching her arm, "le' me go down to de camp groun' an' go up along Mars Sam."

America was calm as a figure head of Minerva on a sinking ship. She could settle with Merit when she had less on her hands. If the world

were on fire, and she didn't know but it might be for all the water, dropping the reins would not help matters, she silently reasoned. The trees bent in the whirlwind like grain, but happily the road was sheltered by the hill for some distance. When they reached the open plain, there was an ominous hush in the storm, and America lashed the horses forward at their utmost speed.

"How sorry Phil is that he did not stay and ride home with me," thought Marjory. In the stifling air of the closely shut carriage, there was a subtle spell in the scent of the flowers she was holding. She heard voices above the tempest, and over and over she listened to every word. Was it true? could it be true? all this that was shrivelling every joy of her life, this prophecy of inevitable doom? Was it coming, so near, so inexorable? The scent of the roses was suffocating. She would have thrown them from her if she could; dust to dust, ashes to ashes; why had roses ever bloomed or hearts ever been glad? It was horrible! What a great trap the world was, and how helpless she, and all the rest, in the device from which there was no escape. She hated this God; and with her

intense rebellion there came again the memory of the God of her earliest childhood, the prayers she used to say at her father's knee, the God somehow painfully associated with the great coffins at the shop door. Her father believed in this very God Letitia Barkenstone would have her make peace with before it was forever too late. Make peace with! He had broken her peace. Would He had never found her again! Yes, she wished she could hide from Him! She would fly to any rock or mountain that would hide her from Him forevermore. What if that night were the end? that hour? Her heart stood still! She called out to America through a gap in the curtain between them.

"Can you see the camp ground? Are the tents gone?"

America laughed derisively, and answered in the shrillest key.

"Nebber min' dem ranters, honey. Dey've got Miss Tisha fur a driber; dem Buckinridges don't git upsot while dere's any ting to stan' on. Mars Sam didn't take her to de camp groun'. Tink Miss Tisha's gwine up wid a lot of white trash? I knows Miss Tisha, don' ye worry 'bout her. Look a dar at de ole

house—ebery windah is gwine. Miss Prissy is lookin' out fur us, shuah nuff."

"Lively times up there!" they heard Duncan Cameron shout above the whistling tornado as they drove through the gate. They paid little heed. Under the great wood-shed where the carriage brought up, Priscilla Ottoway met them. Marjory threw her arms about her neck and burst into tears.

"Well, never mind, now it is over," holding her close to her heart. "Great things have happened here to-night." And then she told them how the storm had driven the people on the camp ground to her door, how they had filled the house to overflowing, even the barns, for the tents had been blown down and there was no end of frightened women and children. Happily for her, Phil had been there when the stampede began.

"And mother?" asked Marjory, her quick ear catching her mother's voice in the babel within.

"It is the old story," was the tranquil reply. "She heard the women praying and walked in among them. They have anointed her with oil and pronounced her healed."

The door opened at that moment and a masculine woman came forth shouting in a trance-like ecstasy.

"She hath put her trust in the arm of the Lord. The hoofs of the daughters of Zion are as brass, and they shall tread down their enemies, praise the Lord."

Behind her stood Annie Burke, an unnatural brilliancy in her dilated eyes, a painful smile on her quivering mouth, every nerve strained to its utmost as she uplifted her thin arms and held them open a moment, then sank upon her chair. Marjory stood gazing at her transfixed with horror, then, without having uttered a word, retreated and darted up the stairs. She found Phil on guard by her door.

"It's the only room in the house they haven't taken possession of, but I've had my way about this one." The sound of an infant's pitiful wailing was heard in her mother's chamber, and men and women were bustling through the hall. "I'll clear them all out at daylight, Marjory, if it takes a shotgun. Make fast the door somehow"—bolts and locks were unknown in the interior of the house. "I must go and help Merit. It will take no end of oats for all

the horses in the stable. There'll never be another meeting on that camp ground."

Then he came back to make sure she wanted nothing. She thanked him absently, wearily. The rain was beating against the windows. The wind shook the house. The valley was ablaze with the lightning, and the thunder terribly near. She had dropped the bouquet, and she gave a little start when she saw it under his masquerading boots.

"Yes, do come back, Phil, as soon as you can. Tell America to bring mother here at once. We must get her away from those dreadful women."

* * * * * *

The storm was over by daybreak, and great was the havoc left in its track. Giant trees had been twisted like osiers and torn up by the roots, houses unroofed, and wheat-fields trodden down as by hosts of armed men. The big tent was a wreck. That no one of the multitude on the ground was harmed in the least was considered a miracle. Every house in the vicinity was over-filled with believers, and great was the army of new converts, scoffers before the outbreak of the storm.

The story of the instantaneous healing of Annie Burke was proclaimed throughout the valley, and soon throughout the land. There was a new interest in the old house and its inmates, and the story of the boy preacher and his marriage was revived. Annie Burke found herself very famous, or rather the company of women who had assumed the charge of her still nebulous and uncertain conceptions of what was taking place, impressed her with the fact that the eyes of an unbelieving world were upon her, and that she had been uplifted by the prayers of saints whose wings would not fail in supporting her until her own pinions were strong. She would not be separated from them, and Marjory had found that interference was in vain.

The morning so many had never expected to behold, found Priscilla Ottoway sitting before the kitchen fire with a sleeping baby on her lap. America had drawn back the curtains, and mixed her bountiful provision of cakes and breads, with unflattering comments upon the guests of the house, and particularly the baby that had kept her mistress nursing it for hours. They never had such doings down

South. It was only "up Norf" where, from her outlook that morning, Mars Sam and Miss Tisha had unlimited freedom in making everybody miserable. They had kept her sitting up on the kitchen settle all night, to say nothing of spoiling a big field of corn, she had planted and hoed in shares with the Camerons. She had put out the candles perhaps a trifle too early, and made unnecessary haste in calling Merit from his dreams, to prepare a bountiful supply of potatoes, but it would be an early breakfast she would serve that morning, and after breakfast the house should be cleared if Miss Prissy would let Mars Phil have his way about it.

Priscilla Ottoway was paying no heed to the black mammy's monologue, as she sat watching the sleeping baby, its little fingers curled around her own. How sweetly the day was breaking after such a night! How green the valley lay in the gray dawn! She could get a glimpse of it all from where she sat, half fancying there was an increase of joy in the song of the birds, the crowing of the cocks, and the tranquil lowing of the herds; the joy that would come to Marjory with her waking she hoped, the true song of

her life so harshly interrupted, and that at its height, as Priscilla Ottoway thought, recalling the flushed smiling face looking back at her from the carriage the evening before. It had been a trying night for the child, but she was elastic and brave, "and this too," she was repeating to herself, "shall pass away," when an outcry from Merit, and the croaking of Poll-Betsey in her startled flight from his shoulder to the mantel-piece broke her abstraction. Marjory was standing beside her haggard and pale.

"O Lor, Miss Margie," and Merit tried rubbing the cobwebs from his eyes, "I mus' be dreamin' shuah. I's bin dreamin' 'bout yer all night, an' Lijah's cha'yot, an' de hosses wid de golden shoes."

Aunt Prissy had drawn her to her side.

"What a dreary morning it is," Marjory said with a slight shiver, "and you have been sitting here with that poor baby half the night."

"Lettin' folks sleep as'll only keep folks awake wid dere howlin' when dey git rested," put in America, as if to the rolling-pin flattening out her hillocks of dough.

"But I could not sleep, Aunt Prissy, how could I? Let me take the baby and you go to

my room," essaying to relieve her of her burden, but without success. "Everything is horribly dreary," looking around the kitchen. "I thought the night would never go by. Yes, mother is asleep. Will those dreadful women stay here forever? No, America, I couldn't," pushing aside the cup of coffee. "Let me sit down here by you, Merit," and she crept into the corner beside him, as she used to do when a little child and the world went wrong.

"We'se gwine ter git out o' de wid-e-ness by'm by, Miss Margie. Dere ain't no wid-e-ness big nuff fer de Lawd's people to git los' in. I dreamed las' night dat you an' Mars Sam——"

America ended that narrative promptly.

"But what are we going to do with them all?" insisted Marjory. "I half wish mother may disappoint those dreadful women this morning, don't you?"

"But she won't," said Aunt Prissy slowly and firmly.

"And can't we send them away?"

"Not until they have had their breakfast, child. What if your mother insists on going with them?"

"Oh Aunt Prissy!" incredulously.

"We must accept the inevitable. I cannot tell you now why I believe she will go with these people and why I cannot prevent it even for your sake, Marjory. All will be for the best, my child. Fate wounds us most when we fight against it."

"And is there nothing stronger than fate? I hate it all. I feel like a fly in a web. Oh, Aunt Prissy," suddenly softening, her tears coming fast, "we were so happy before all this, and now nothing can be the same again."

"Nonsense, Marjory. Why, child, I am disappointed in you," the soft pity in her eyes contradicting her words; Marjory's were hidden in her hands. "Learn to be the master of your moods, if you would master all else. Cheer up, child, see what a sunrise after last night!"

"But why did the sun ever rise, if all that they say is going to happen must come, and very soon?"

Merit was making no headway with his potatoes during this conversation, and was evidently under painful repression, his eyes rolling from Marjory to America, with marvellous change of expression.

"Whose gwine ter keep de sun from risin', chile?" and America briskly dusted the flour from her hands. "De best ting for yer dis mawnin' is a bowl o' catnip. Leab it to 'er old mammy, Miss Prissy, to cure 'er of dem hugger-muggers. I wondahs we'se not all done for wid de dancin', an' de prayin', an' de hollerin'. For my part—"

A step was heard outside, then a low rap, and Samuel Breckinridge walked in, surprised and for a moment disconcerted at finding any one but the blacks in the kitchen. He had spent a sleepless night, he said, at the over-crowded inn where he and Letitia Barkenstone had found refuge from the storm. He had been anxious about Marjory, fearful lest some accident had befallen her. He had heard of the demand upon their hospitality, had met the "brother" hastening with the news of the "miracle" to Letitia Barkenstone. He used the word miracle tentatively, it was plain, furtively observing its effects upon Marjory and her aunt. Their silent acquiescence convinced him that there was a foundation at least for the report the brother had risen so early to spread abroad.

"I am so glad you have come," he had heard Marjory say before he discerned her in the deep chimney corner, her hands outstretched entreatingly, and eager expectancy in her troubled unsmiling face.

"Then I am glad I am come, my child," he responded with a cheerfulness equal to the constraint in Priscilla Ottoway's welcome, and the frown with which America had surveyed his muddy boots. Drawing up to the fire, for the morning was chilly and damp, he had merrily recounted his experience of the night before, calling out from each of them, excepting Marjory who was silent and grave, a story which he made amusing if they did not.

"Did I dream there was a masquerade only last night?" handing the cup of coffee Priscilla Ottoway ordered for him to Marjory and insisting on her breakfasting with him, "and that the Cardinal Richelieu was charmed with a lovely abbess?"

"It seems years ago," said Marjory, brightening.

"Then it was not a dream? But such a long night as it has been, and such a long discourse as my sister Letitia has delivered.

She is discoursing yet," shrugging his shoulders. "She has the keys to all the prophecies, and she has unlocked those prophecies one by one, and made known their mysteries. She is wonderfully eloquent. Nobody thought of going to sleep. She is coming over here to-day." The baby was crying and Priscilla Ottoway carried it to its mother. "She is desirous to see you again. Don't let that trouble you, child," with low entreaty, for the shadow deepened on Marjory's face. "It is necessary that she should see your aunt. In fact her business brings me here this morning, that and my anxiety about you."

The house was astir, and a peculiar waking it naturally was, the believers exchanging greetings with each other, expressive of their thanksgiving that another morning had dawned, that the tarrying time was a little longer prolonged, one of the brethren singing, in a rasping nasal voice, as he made his ablutions at the spring near the kitchen door:

> "The last lovely morning
> All blooming and fair,
> Is fast onward fleeting
> And soon will appear."

"What straws in the whirlpool of fate we are!" Marjory heard Sam Breckinridge saying while watching the scene outside. "The wonder is they don't work more miracles than they do. I am prepared for anything in the way of signs and wonders in such a gathering. There ought to be no end of miracles here to-day."

"Do you think it is nothing that my mother has been healed?" asked Marjory, a judgment in her eye he shrank from encountering.

He stood musing a moment, his smile deepening with his perplexity in answering her.

"Miracles always come, child, when miracles are in demand. Yes, we must call this a miracle, I suppose, if a miracle is what some have defined it—a surprise."

"Aunt Prissy is not surprised, and Phil says it is just what might have been expected," his smile reflected on her brightening face.

"Then call it a fact, if it be one, and don't get morbid brooding over it. Leave it to wiseacres to discuss if it's a sign from heaven, or the sequence of heredity, constitutional bias, cerebral conformation, cranial vision——" Marjory was laughing outright. "We don't read

that the apostles studied the miracles psychologically. The best thing you can do, my child, is to get out of all this as soon as possible. Nan will help you this morning, as no one else can. A gallop with her on the upland road is what you need." And nothing she could say prevented his going to the stables, where he found Phil, and between them they saddled the mettlesome mare, who in less than an hour was a good ten miles from the old house in the valley, the ruddy-cheeked girl on her back half wishing she might never turn back, if so she might escape—she hardly could have told from what.

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM THE DEAD.

THE carriage had hardly left the house the night before bearing Marjory to the masquerade, when Priscilla Ottoway, sitting in the dusky shadow of the porch with her dogs around her, saw Dennis Cameron approaching the house. He brought her what she seldom received in those days, since the death of John Wilson's sisters—a letter. Bidding Dennis wait, she went inside and broke the seal.

It was from Christopher Burke.

He was in Philadelphia, had just returned from England, where he had been for many years. "What has become of my wife and child? Let nothing delay our meeting if they are still in the flesh." He stated that he was a believer in the Speedy Coming, a proclaimer of the glad tidings, and had spent everything that he might make the journey home and see wife

and child again, pluck them, perhaps, as brands from the burning. Everything relating to his disappearance could be explained. Would she send him the means to reach his family if they were still alive? He should have hastened to the meeting on the Barley Flats camp ground but for lack of funds. He closed with an exhortation for her to repent, if she had not already found peace with her God.

"Wait, Dennis," she called sharply before she had read many sentences, "you must carry a letter to the office for me to-night." Without giving the letter a second reading she wrote:

"Meet me at Happy Valley. I will leave here for there to-morrow morning," adding a few concise directions as to the place where he might expect to find her.

She watched Dennis ride away in the moonlight, and heard the sound of his horse's feet as they dashed over the wooden bridges between her and the high road. No, she had not made a rash decision. She would go. She would protect Marjory at any cost. She must see this Christopher Burke, this unknown equation in Marjory's life, this man who had so inoppor-

tunely risen from the dead. Possibly, yes probably, their meeting would result in his departure for parts unknown, and Marjory should never know of his return and existence.

"There must be an interference of Providence in this matter, and I must constitute myself a providence," she said to herself, smiling as she turned into the house, and went directly to the store-room for her little travelling trunk, which she carried to her own apartment. Having laid out the necessaries for a short journey, and made certain entries in her account books, she bethought her of several letters of a business nature, which it were wisest for her to despatch on the morrow. One of them was in regard to placing Marjory in a girls' school not far from Happy Valley. She had only hastened an intended journey; her family were accustomed to her sudden and unexplained flights. In an hour's time the idea of the journey had become familiar to her, as even the meeting with Christopher Burke and despatching him from Marjory's future entirely. In her absorption of writing out directions for Phil in certain legal and domestic matters she had not noted the increasing fury of the sudden storm. The

panic-stricken crowd from the camp ground were pouring in at her door before she began to realize what a wild night it was, and that Annie Burke was flitting about the wide landing at the head of the stairs. Those who looked up at the sound of her shrill ecstatic cry, saw a woman in white, her long hair unbound, leaning over the baluster rail with distended eyes trying to gain an answer from the babel below.

"Is he coming? Is he coming? Tell him I am here, and waiting for him. I knew he would come! I knew he would."

Had Priscilla Ottoway foreseen the events of the night, Dennis Cameron had carried another letter to the post-office. Priscilla Ottoway hardly remembered what she had written, and bound herself to do on the morrow, until having given up her baby charge, she found herself alone in her room again, her guests having gone to breakfast. There was the little trunk; yes, she would go. She must escape this fearful confusion, intrusion, and prevent if possible what would follow the arrival of Christopher Burke upon the scene. Phil and America were equal to the task of restoring quiet to the old

house. The lease of the camp ground terminated that very day. Phil would see that the premises were clear. All would be over when she came home. She was finishing packing her trunk when America came in, dumb with indignation. She had been called "Sister America", and some of the company had insisted on her sitting down at the table with them.

"I jes' shet de doah on waitin' on no sech trash. Kawn bread and bacon is good nuff for dem."

"Cheer up, mammy. Send Miss Marjory to me, please."

But Miss Marjory had "gone away on Nan to be shuah, and Miss Marjory was clean tuckered out," and if somebody didn't take "some 'sponsibility 'foah long" they'd all be set out in de road and the camp meetin' would be in Miss Prissy's parlah. She never heard of such doin's down in Kentucky. The Buckinridges never let such a raft into their house. She believed it had all come long of that Sam Buckinridge. She knew Mars Sam. She knew every one of those Buckinridges.

She stood motionless, her wide back firmly planted against the closed door, the beads of

her gorgeous necklace rising and falling upon her heaving bosom.

"I am glad Marjory has gone for a ride, I hope she will go to the Hermitage and stay there until night."

Priscilla Ottoway was looking up half smiling into the sullen eyes, so strangely blind to what her mistress was doing, the little trunk, the signs of her going away. "Somebody has got to have some 'sponsibility around here for the next week, America. Don't you see I am getting ready to go away?"

Very slowly and without changing a muscle America became conscious of what was taking place. She looked at the trunk with stolid composure.

"Does Mars Sam know yer gwine?"

"No, no one knows of it yet, only you, America," shutting down the trunk lid, and snapping the clasps. "I shall be back by the time you have everything in order again. This is the last camp meeting."

"I 'spects Miss Annie 'll be pow'ful hard to manage."

"Not when everybody is gone, and you must see that the house is clear to-night."

America threw back her head, her broad nostrils dilating.

"I'll do jes as ye sez, Miss Prissy, but when Miss Annie takes de bit, ye know!"

"She will be quiet in a few days, I hope," her voice belieing her words. "You must be firm with her, or you will lose your baby, America."

But the old mammy was thinking of something else. Her heavy lidded eyes were seemingly absorbed in something mysterious on the outermost hill encircling the wide valley.

"Is yo' eyes shet, Miss Prissy? Don' ye see clar nuff dat Miss Annie is gwine? an' dat Miss Margie is gwine, an' dat de debbil is at de bottom of ebery ting since Sam Buckinridge com' roun'?"

"Hush, America, you don't know anything about it."

"Don' I?" her dull eyes gleaming, "don' I know some tings de rest of you uns nebber heahs 'bout? I don' count much on de Lawd. He let 'em take my chillen, let de debbil hab his way ebery time, jes as 'e allus does. Dis niggah don't shet up 'er eyes like ole Merit dar, an' go stumblin' roun' sayin' de angels is a leadin' me." A long portentous silence. "I

wants my free papers, Miss Prissy. Don' you go away wid out gibbin me dem.''

Priscilla Ottoway's face was shadowed with deep concern. She had learned to value America's quick intuition, to regard her as a seer, and her trust in her prophecies had seldom been at fault.

"You are as safe, America, as if you had your free papers. You can trust Mr. Breckinridge, and surely you can trust me."

America clutched fiercely at her sleeve with the strong fingers of her tight folded arms. Her hoarse mumbling was incoherent at first, but her voice rose steadily and strong.

"Somefin's comin', comin' right along. Didn't I heah de bloodhouns las' night, an' my chillen cryin'? I know wat dat means, no use splanin' dat," with a significant movement of her right hand amid the ample folds of her gay kerchief. "Mars Sam ain't hangin' roun' heah for nuffin. Merit's gwine ter follah him off like a puppy, dat's jes wot Merit's good fo'. Dat isn't de ole mammy," her teeth gleaming in her frightful smile. "When I follahs Mars Sam, see, dis yeah—" and she drew out a knife, holding it up triumphantly.

Priscilla Ottoway was confounded.

"Give it to me, America."

America measured her with her eyes, nearly closed, but made no sign of obedience, then hid the knife under her kerchief again with a dogged determination Priscilla Ottoway would not deal with. She was considering the matter of the free papers, however, in a new light, and America closely watching her, silently awaited her decision.

"I will settle the matter before I go away," she said at last. "You may send Mr. Breckinridge to me at once."

"I've 'lowed to pay for Merit mysef," and the ole mammy's composure was as perfect as if she were selling one of her fox hound puppies. "Heah's five hundred dollahs," bringing a leathern bag from under her petticoat. "De res' will be comin' in soon. Mars Phil says he'll help me to somefin, an' he'se gwine ter raise our wages, an' don't yer be 'fraid of our dyin' 'foah it's paid up. I'se gwine ter be Merit's massar myself. Den we'll see about dis yeah Mars Sam."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD.

ANNIE BURKE'S appearance in the breakfast room that morning, was the signal for an outburst of rapturous ejaculation, Elder Stiggins dropping his buttered muffin to fall upon his knees, the rest of the company following his example. Then a detailed account of the miraculous event was given, Elder Stiggins laboring under the impression, seemingly, that he was proclaiming the same not only to an astounded world but the universe generally.

Annie Burke knelt with the rest unnoting the absence of Priscilla Ottoway, and Marjory, and even America's withdrawal from the table. Her voice was shrill and tremulous, her cheek glowing and paling with the fitful flame in her dilated eyes, but something, call it what you will, had vitalized her paralyzed will, and she was something more than the weak, passive subject

of the stony wills controlling her. Quickened by a sense of her conspicuous uplifting before an unbelieving world, she was rapidly becoming more conscious of her power on those whose reverence affected her as a stimulant, a tonic, permanent in its effects at least, as the excitement of the fanaticism generating it.

"It is a fever that must run its course," Priscilla Ottoway was saying to herself as she watched her from her window that morning, when the company had passed out from the breakfast-room into the glorious sunlight, and might be seen ranged along each side of the drive-way watching Annie Burke as she walked leaning on the arm of Sister Phœbe, and heard them saying that the Lord in the whirlwind of his power—a wind like that of the Pentecost of old—had given unto them a sign of his presence and power.

She was anticipating the interview with Samuel Breckinridge. He must give her the free papers. Then there was the meeting with Christopher Burke, and the release for Marjory. What a bargainer in flesh and blood she had become.

She was turning from the window, comfort-

ing herself that by noon, at the latest, her grounds would be clear of the intruders, when she saw some one approaching the house by the narrow foot-path through the orchard: a tall stately woman, seemingly lost in meditation as she walked slowly through the dewy grass, unmindful of wet feet or bedraggled skirts. Screened from the company in front of the house by the intervening shrubbery, Priscilla Ottoway had seen her stop short when the sound of voices struck her ear, and turn as if to flee from the spot. Then she had crossed her arms serenely, as if in submission, had stood for a moment with her eyes fixed upon the sky above her, a smile slowly dawning upon her weary face, her soul evidently passing into communion with the unseen.

Priscilla Ottoway recognized her at once, and prepared to receive Letitia Barkenstone, by first subjecting her impulses to an undefined chilling process, a cold dissection of the germs of admiration called forth by that first sight of the enthusiast.

It was not a pleasant meeting for either of them, notwithstanding Samuel Breckinridge did all that sprightly affability on his part could do

to dispel the constraint of the interview. Priscilla Ottoway was cold and reticent; Letitia Barkenstone abstracted, lost in an ecstatic isolation that the glacial atmosphere of her host could not penetrate. Priscilla Ottoway had not advanced a step to meet Letitia Barkenstone, had not even extended her hand, but had scrutinized her with her challenging cold gaze. Letitia Barkenstone had been utterly oblivious of the social temperature: it may be doubted if she could have told what manner of woman Priscilla Ottoway was like, when she hurried towards her with outstretched hands and actually kissed her upon the cheek; Samuel Breckinridge witnessing the salute and the dumb amazement with which it was received, as well as the blindness of the giver, with a humorous twinkle of his restless eyes.

"Behold in me, Sister Ottoway, the humble handmaid of the Lord." Alas for the bedraggled skirts and bonnet awry. "I came to thank you in behalf of His saints for the city of refuge your house has been unto them. The Lord will remember the corn and the wine you have outpoured for His children. All the ends of the earth shall hear and rejoice in the won-

derful outpouring of His favor upon your household last night, in the sign of His presence, making your lame to leap as a hart, your impotent folk—"

"Nonsense," thrust in Priscilla Ottoway.

"Scoff not at the Lord's doings, so marvellous in our eyes." Had she seen Priscilla Ottoway at all, or was she speaking to an unseen multitude on a plane below her, those hungry souls forever hemming her in? "In the wilderness have the waters gushed forth. To them that called not upon the Lord hath He appeared on the wings of healing."

"If you will be seated a moment," Priscilla Ottoway had broken in, as she was accustomed to curtail garrulous Peggy Cameron's flow of speech, "I can soon attend to the trifling business you would have settled this morning." She moved promptly, and without a look at her visitor, who was becoming conscious of the chill of her reception, to her writing desk, where she began carefully looking over a package of papers. "The lease for the camp ground expired this morning," she said curtly, "and nothing must prevent the removal of the big tent before to-morrow," indicating by her man-

ner that having so said, her business with Miss Barkenstone was at an end.

"Miss Barkenstone came to ask a favor of you this morning," Sam interposed with charming grace, pulling hard upon his mustache, as he drew close to Priscilla Ottoway's side, and managed to confide to her quick ear, "Leave me alone with her a moment, I will secure the free papers," adding in a louder voice, recalling Letitia Barkenstone from a trance-like revery, "I wish, ladies, that you might have met under different circumstances," whereupon they exchanged quick guarded glances, and poor Sam was more uncomfortable than before.

Priscilla Ottoway withdrew at Sam's request, leaving him alone with his sister. She was soon recalled, something in Samuel Breckinridge's voice heralding a victory for him at least. Letitia Barkenstone was walking up and down the room excitedly, Sam mending a quill pen with infinitesimal pains.

"Will Miss Ottoway please read this paper?" he asked, indicating the sheet upon the table, the ink not yet dry. "It has been hastily drawn up, but it will hold, until it can be submitted to legal authority."

"If my brother will but believe," Letitia Barkenstone was saying as if to herself and in self-justification, "my worldly goods I would count as dross. Lest through my lack of faith he should not lay hold on the promises, let my faith be tested, yea made to pass through the fire. He *will* come. My confidence in His words shall not have been in vain. Is it for naught that He manifests himself so marvellously beneath this roof, that He adds sign to sign?"

Priscilla Ottoway was slowly reading the document aloud.

"This is to certify, that I, Letitia Barkenstone, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, do solemnly promise to give to my half-brother, Samuel Ashland Breckinridge, or to Priscilla Ottoway or heirs, *on the first day of December, the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and forty-four*, the sum of twenty-five hundred dollars, upon the condition that the camp ground belonging to Priscilla Ottoway remain in the possession of Letitia Barkenstone until October 31, 1844.

"(Signed) LETITIA BARKENSTONE."

"But no," said Priscilla Ottoway emphatically, frowning upon Sam as she threw the paper

aside, "I will not have them here a day longer."

He drew her into the passage, before she could say more.

"They will remain in your near neighborhood if driven from your grounds," he said; "here are the free papers, signed. Yes, I told her about the slaves, she said their year of jubilee *had* come, that even if I sent them back to Kentucky their bondage would soon be over. It was the test of her faith that time would last beyond October, that secured that paper. She will squander every penny of her fortune if restraint is not put upon her by some one. This is a part of my plan for saving something from the wreck."

Letitia Barkenstone was kneeling in prayer when they re-entered the room. They waited in silence until she rose, the sweet serenity of her face impressing Priscilla Ottoway deeply. Upon Sam asking her if he might read the document to a selected few of the company assembled in the parlor, making them witnesses of her signing the same, she named two persons as witnesses, agreeing with him that it was best to keep the matter from the public generally.

* * * * * *

Noon came and passed, but Marjory did not return. Before leaving for the village where she was to take the afternoon stage Priscilla Ottoway wrote to her as follows:

"I shall write you from Happy Valley, perhaps send for you to come to me. If you do not get a letter at once do not be disturbed. Why not accept Mrs. Wardell's invitation and spend a few days at the Hermitage? Your mother will insist upon leaving with those people. Don't let that trouble you. 'This too shall pass away.'"

CHAPTER XVIII.

BEFOGGED.

THOSE were stirring times for mine host of the village inn. What with Livingston County mass meetings—it was the fall of the memorable Jimmy Polk and Henry Clay campaign—the Millerite camp meeting, and Mrs. Wardell's guests, he had little leisure for studying the fundamental theories of Texas Annexation, or the correct interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy. If the world were to end on the tenth day of that seventh month, he must make the most of the interim. One thing he knew for a certainty: Father Miller and the political turmoil were sweeping the dollars into his till, and so he might be forgiven for refusing to scoff at the one, or make himself an antagonist of either party. His broad piazza commanded the village common, and as far as he had anything to say, was a free platform for anything that drew

a crowd. Garrison or Calhoun—Millerism or Mesmerism—it was all the same to him. He only dreaded the reaction sure to follow the excitement.

"Turned ye out of house and home, did they!" was his effervescent greeting of Priscillo Ottoway that afternoon, when she called for a quiet room where she might wait for the packet stage. "I've bin tellin' the folks how they must have come down on ye like grasshoppers. How they did streak it, though! Lucky for 'em, ye let 'em in at all. Your big dogs couldn't have bin roun' I reckon."

Considering they were old neighbors and that he had never had such an opportunity for a bit of conversation with Miss Ottoway, he thought her brief explanation of the whereabouts of the dogs a discouraging response to his cordial effort at acquaintance. She must be weighed down with some great trouble, he thought, something he could lighten without doubt if she would seek his advice, or, after the passive habit of most of the villagers, consent to receive it unasked.

It took a moment for him to recover his equilibrium, upon her curt interruption of his

effusive praise of her dogs, their breed and beauty. She renewed her request for a quiet room where she might wait for the stage.

"We're purty full, Miss Otterway, fuller nor we kin hol'," picking up her bag notwithstanding, and preceding her along the passage, raising his voice in proportion to his ascent of the steep stairs. "But I'm going to give you a room, the best room in the house. I never turn out an old neighbor, mind ye. Praps now," throwing open a door as if bowing to an admiring constituency within, stopping on the threshold to continue his harangue, his broad back preventing a glimpse of the interior, "praps now this will suit ye? You can look right over to the meetin' house by and by and hear the Whig speakin' if the loco focos don't set their brass band a goin', as I hear tell they mean ter."

"The room will do very well."

Thereupon he marched forward triumphantly, threw back the blinds, and opened a door upon the board upper piazza, a very bower under the great elms.

"Now isn't that a purty picture?" his finger indicating the aperture in the leafage through

which she saw, "the old house in the valley" thrilling her like the gaze of a living face. "Some folks cum up here just to look off from this piazzer. Yed oughter hear some English folks I hed 'ere this summer go on about that voo, and all the questions they asked about you over there in the meader. Now I shall have something to tell 'em. There never was anybody sot up with a mirakul in these parts before, unless—"

Priscilla Ottoway evaded the reminiscence by a rather imperious request for a cup of tea. Once alone, she sat down in the embowered corner of the piazza and wearily closed her eyes, and the old house seemed watching her, to have her under its mysterious care.

On the grass plot below a company of gentlemen, Mrs. Wardell's guests of the evening before, were smoking their after dinner cigars. Had Priscilla Ottoway cared to listen to their conversation, she could have learned that Doctor and Mrs. Wardell had been summoned to New York not many hours before to attend the bedside of a dying relative, and that this party, who had expected to spend several days at the Hermitage had been forced by their sudden

departure, and that of Dan and Kate McVicar as well, to recast their plans for a holiday. She would have recognized Dan's voice when he stopped a moment to chat with them, to deliver Mrs. Wardell's last message that they should not leave the Genesee Valley without seeing the wild ravine at Portage, and the charming inland lakes, and before he was fairly out of hearing she would have heard the stout elderly man whose mental energies seemed concentrated on devious devices for balancing his ebony cane, since he had tossed away a half smoked cigar, saying in a summarizing way ;

"Well, we can say this for him, he isn't a prig."

"Consider, how narrow his escape," said a drawling lisping smoker, who seemed only half conscious of the meaning of the laughter his response evoked.

"It won't do to pronounce upon Dan until he's finished," continued the first speaker. "A trifle more ecclesiasticism would spoil him completely."

They seemed to have fallen asleep upon that. Then some one was drowsily asking: "Did you hear that Millerite preacher this morning?

that man with the chart? 'How can you shut your eyes to the signs of the times?' said he, 'and dance on the brink of destruction? Do you know that fighting is going on between the French and the Moors? that war embers are fanning in Tahiti, and that a mob is organizing among the sailors of Canton?'"

At this they laughed hilariously.

Priscilla Ottoway was by this time unconsciously listening to the conversation, or to such snatches of it as she could hear without effort.

"What if Sam Breckinridge comes back with a chart and an ascension robe? He ought to preach a good sermon on *the last trump.*" At this they laughed louder than before.

"Have you seen him this morning?"

"No. The landlord says he was off at daybreak on some business for that queer sister of his. Magnificent woman! Never saw anything better on the stage."

The landlord came in with her supper just then, and having spread it upon a little table beside her on the piazza, essayed somewhat timorously to renew his effort at conversation.

"That girl of your'n jes rode by here on that

big black mare of hers. She was goin' like the wind, and headed straight fur hum. She cleared that meder fence as she allers does, and I allers holds my breath when I sees her do it.

"Hope you ain't gettin' lonesome up here all alone. The band will make things cheerfuller by-and-by, and Ted Hosmer's comin' up from Jerry's with a brace of coons in a cage. He's goin' to put 'em up on the loco-focos pole. Bill Sanders has heard about it and he has brought a monkey. Bill Sanders is a Whig, you know. You can't see much up here, the trees are so thick, but by'm-by you must come down into the settin'-room."

She was glad to be alone again, and to know that Marjory was most likely at home by that time.

* * * * *

A slow, heavy footstep in the passage—one she was eagerly waiting to hear, and she hastened to meet Phil. He came in without speaking. She led him out upon the piazza. His eye sought the old house at once, and rested upon it with softening lustre. What a picture of peace it was, the great chimney, the

wide sloping roof, the outlying meadows, and the broad fields of wheat and corn!

"Cheer up, Phil. The free papers are signed and delivered. There has been no trouble in negotiating Miss Barkenstone's note; Doctor Wardell has arranged all that. But what has happened at home since I left? Was the house clear? Had Annie consented to remain behind?"

Little by little he told his story. No, the house was not cleared, and he could not say when it would be if she did not give up going away for the present. Letitia Barkenstone was there, "like a queen on her throne," and no one was so devoted to her as Marjory. Samuel Breckinridge was there also. Phil could not understand why they should keep open house for all creation. That farm, any other, would never be big enough for him and Sam Breckenridge. Marjory had begged of him to say nothing more about "clearing the house," now that her Aunt Prissy was gone, at least not until the camp ground was in order again. She must keep her mother with her as long as she could. There had been much prayer and exhortation in the great parlor, and nothing

he could say had any influence upon Marjory in keeping her where she could not hear Letitia Barkenstone. America of course was in no pleasant mood. She had even threatened to horsewhip old Merit if he did not "keep shet of de goin's-on." What Phil considered most unpardonable in Marjory was her thankfulness that her Aunt Prissy had gone away for a while. She had sent a message bidding her have no anxiety about her in her absence; that her departure was opportune.

"She is going to believe all this stuff they are teaching her," muttered Phil. "She more than half believes it now. If you must go, why not take her with you—take her out of all this?"

A gray pallor overspread Priscilla Ottoway's cheek, a momentary revelation of physical pain; a quick pressure of her hand upon her heart. Then she took his hand in hers, and looked into his condemning eyes.

"I must not let you misjudge me, my boy. I am doing my best for Marjory. I have not told you the secret cause of my going away: I have heard from Christopher Burke. I am going to meet him, to prevent his coming here.

He has turned up at last, and a Millerite preacher at that."

"The devil he has!" ejaculated Phil, under his breath, snatching his hands from hers and thrusting them deep into his pockets.

"I must see him first, then I can tell what to do next."

Phil's response was best unnoted; in fact, it was unheard by Priscilla Ottoway, for the band on the Common was playing uproariously, and the Whigs were having high carnival. They went inside, and she drew him to a seat upon the sofa beside her.

"I have another secret for you, Phil." Her low voice thrilled him strangely, subdued his rebellion. "I am under the care of a physician."

He started and looked incredulous.

"No, Marjory does not know. She must not yet. I must avoid all excitement. My safety is in quiet, in peace. That is another reason for my going now. No, there is not the slightest danger in my travelling alone. And I have a strange longing to go back once more to Happy Valley."

The tears were streaming down his cheeks as

she told him calmly of all she had planned for his future and Marjory's.

The farm would be theirs, of course, and all that she had, saving the provision she had made for Annie and Merit and America. Christopher Burke's return might necessitate some change in her will. But if she were taken away before such changes as she specified had been made, she could trust him to carry out her wishes.

They caught the sound of the stage horn.

"Stand by Marjory, Phil, whatever happens. If it comes to sacrificing my interest for her happiness, don't hesitate. You will hear from me soon; but if you do not, don't be distressed; all will come out right."

Her last glimpse of him was from the stage-coach as it turned out of the main street. There he stood, just where she had left him, still looking at the ground, his hands deep in his pockets.

CHAPTER XIX.

WINNING THE GAME.

THE destruction of a world, the annihilation of matter, the discontinuance of material substance, were not so scientifically unthinkable and theologically monstrous to the mind of man in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and forty-four as they are to-day.

For a time the Barley Flats camp ground was the head-centre of the spreading fanaticism in western New York. The big tent was the attraction of believers and scoffers alike. The singing and shouting of the multitude could be heard at a great distance at all times of the day and night. Many of the most popular and thrilling of the old Millerite hymns were taken from the orthodox hymn-books. Sung by the believers in the Speedy Coming, under the solemn forest trees at night, they had a meaning and a power which they can never have in their present use. The words express the same

ancient expectation, but how meaningless they are to those who have heard them uplifted by the followers of Father Miller!

Like thistledown on a whirlwind, a leaf on a strong tide, Marjory had been swept into the vortex of excitement, and painfully transformed. Her strong individuality had been intensified, her self-reliance forced into an aggressive heroism through her zeal for the conversion of souls. Her healthy independence of mind had developed into a defiant fearlessness of opposition, a braving of ridicule. Had she not read of Jeanne D'Arc and the heroines of the Crusades? She thought of them when she rode through the village and across the wide country, scattering "the gospel of the kingdom," proclaiming in her earnest, simple way that the year of jubilee had come. Men were called from their work in the fields by her clarion-like voice and urged to read the tracts she gave them. Children were stopped on their way to school to hear the strange tidings, and tired housekeepers sat down on their doorsteps to listen to the message she brought, the words impressed upon their memories with her brave, beautiful face, her firm, quiet mastery of her

mettlesome horse, and the sullen-looking fellow who kept close beside her, quick to use his whip if the scoffer presumed upon unseemly attack. For Phil, who had ceased to oppose her, made no pretension of believing what she taught, and, happily for her defence, was unfettered by rules of Christian forbearance. She had given up trying to make a convert of Phil. In fact, her efforts in that direction had not been characterized by persistence. Poor child! Had she known her own heart she would have seen that she was glad to have him remain as he was; but she did plead with Victoria Barry, ah, so fruitlessly! coming off from the contest hurt and humiliated.

Victoria Barry, with a servant or two, was staying alone at the Hermitage. She had tried to prevail upon Marjory to join her, and Samuel Breckinridge, who had become the inseparable attendant upon Letitia Barkenstone, favored that plan in opposition to his sister's wishes, which of course prevailed. Samuel Breckinridge avoided Marjory, that was plain. The change in her affected him painfully. When they did meet she felt that he was pitying her, studying all she said and did

compassionately. She avoided him as he did her, and that partly on Phil's account. Phil was so unreasonable! Nothing Samuel Breckinridge did escaped Phil's eye.

"He is playing a game, and a deep one," he said more than once to Marjory.

Two weeks had passed, and the fact that nothing had been heard from Priscilla Ottoway was almost unnoted at Barley Flats, in the whirl of exciting events.

"She will surely come to-morrow," Marjory would say each night. Her mother remained upon the camp ground. She, to please Phil, spent a part of each day at the old house.

It was a dry and tropical August. The sunburnt fields, the crisp, dusty leaves, the rattling reeds along the dry beds of the valley brooks, all strengthened the faith of the believers in the coming conflagration, in the reasonableness of the transforming of that section, at least, into ashes to be trodden under the soles of the feet of the Lord's anointed.

At the close of one of those burning days, when the glorious sunset brought scarcely the ripple of a reviving breeze, there was an unusual increase of the multitude crowded within the

big tent. Father Miller had arrived, the venerable, palsy-shaken old man, whose Johannean humility and devout sincerity were perhaps the secret of his wonderful power.

He had stood upon the rude platform, the prophetical charts an effective background to his snowy head and benign countenance, the vast assembly hushed to supernatural stillness, as, in a sweet tremulous voice, he gave them his farewell assurance of his confidence in the glorious appearing, his unshaken faith that the prophecies of the Second Coming had been each and all fulfilled, and that the last year of the world's history had come. Those who heard him might lack faith in his gospel, but never in the man. He believed what he spake unto the world, and his was the peace and joy of believing, strange as it may seem to some of us that in such a faith as his a soul could have found perfect peace. Bidding them a loving farewell, only for the little time before they should all be caught up together in the air, he had withdrawn, leaning on the arm of an evangelist, the overwrought feeling of the multitude finding expression in singing, as one voice, like unto the sound of many waters:

"We shall all with Christ appear,
By-and-by, when He comes . . "

As if swept into their presence by the mighty tide of exalted feeling, Letitia Barkenstone came forward upon the platform, and the frenzied outpouring of their jubilant anticipation was hushed at once. Never had they seen her when her face shone with such intense illumination, when her whole being seemed so transfigured, her voice so resonant and penetrating, as from the seventh heaven of seership she portrayed the terrors of the last day.

At the feet of the tall wooden model of Nebuchadnezzar's image, a cunningly devised illustration of the passing away of ancient kingdoms, Samuel Breckinridge had sat, while she was speaking, like an image of stone. Marjory, who had been watching him, saw in his face the foreshadowing of something to come, the outcome of the inner struggle, and wondered if his conversion, his confession of faith, would not follow his sister's words. How could he hold out longer?

"And to you that scoffing say we do not truly believe what we preach unto you," were her closing words, "what more can we do than

we have done to prove unto you how firmly our feet are planted upon the rock, the '*thus saith the Lord*,' the evidences by which we were to know when the end should be? You say we do not truly believe? Oh, would it might be given unto me to convince those doubting our sincerity, that we do believe! that we have no ground for doubting! that beyond the tenth day of the seventh month we cannot count upon a day of our Lord's tarrying!"

Samuel Breckinridge advanced to where she was standing and stood quietly beside her, as if waiting to speak with her or to the audience when she had done. He held in his hand a paper that had the appearance of a legal document. Becoming conscious of his presence, she paused and looked questioningly at him, deciding at once that the moment of his confession of faith had come; that he was about to declare that faith to a scoffing world. He saw the impression from which she was about to resume speaking, and checked her, silenced her by a gesture. How cold he seemed after her impassioned fervor! how concentrated, self centred!

"My sister Miss Barkenstone"—bowing first

to her, then to his audience—"did not know, when she expressed the wish, that she might prove to you her faith in what she professes to believe, that the opportunity would be given her to-night, and that now, and before your eyes, she should make such testimony. I have in my hand," and he held the paper high over his head, "an unsigned deed, conveying to me, the brother of Letitia Barkenstone, every dollar she possesses in this world, some one hundred thousand or more in bonds and real estate, all she has not spent for the spread of Father Miller's gospel, to be made mine by her signature; but it may not pass into my possession until after the tenth day of the seventh month shall have passed by. The deed makes ample allowance for a 'tarrying time'," a faint twinkle in his eye. "It specifies that upon the first day of December all her worldly possessions shall be mine. Her signing of this paper, in the presence of you her witnesses, will surely convince the most sceptical among you of her faith that the end of the world will come October twenty-fifth, and she may now give to the world a testimony of faith none may question."

"Sign it! sign it!" rang out from all sides. She was not hesitating, as she stood there, her eyes fixed upon her brother's calm face. She was striving to read what she could not, and with a quick movement towards the table, whereon he had spread out the paper, she carefully read it, smiled, and then slowly wrote her signature, holding up the signed document before the multitude.

"'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His Word shall endure forever,'" her voice rang out clearly. Then turning to her brother, whose eyes were fixed upon the document, a tremulous pathos in her voice, she added:

"Set not your heart upon it, Samuel. Not one farthing of this filthy lucre will ever be yours. The day that cometh will have burned it up long before the first day of next December. Only that it is invested as it is, and is not easily convertible into money, every dollar should have been laid on the Master's altar before this, lest the burden should sink my soul to perdition."

In the wild excitement which prevailed, a babel of singing and prayer, Annie Burke passing into a trance state, revealing to the im-

mediate circle around her the scenes of her beatific vision, Samuel Breckinridge laid his hand firmly upon his sister's arm and led her from the platform to the shadow of the thick beeches, some distance from the tent.

"That singing reminds me," said he, as they walked away, the deed safe in his pocket, her ejaculatory thanksgivings growing fewer and fainter, "of the clangorous outcry of a barbarous host at the gate of victory. What have you in common with this horde, Letitia?"

She stopped short, breathing with difficulty, her lips giving no sound when she struggled to speak.

"Letitia," and there was a woman's tenderness in his voice, and she felt his hand tremble as he laid it upon her shoulder, a glistening drop fell upon his cheek, "let us remember that the same mother was yours and mine; I shall not forget it. Her memory is my law. Trust me. I am your brother. When you signed that bond you made yourself penniless. I shall not forget that I am your brother, your guardian. I am going at once to Philadelphia to look after your affairs. Good-bye." She did not speak. She had set her lips firmly; her

moment of weakness was gone; nor did she extend her hand when he would have taken it, and for once she was at loss for an adequate Scriptural curse.

"You will bless me for what I did to-night some day, Letitia,—when 'the day' shall have gone by. Good-bye." She had sealed her lips evidently, under a vow to keep silence let him say what he would.

"Say good-bye to that poor child for me, Letitia. When Miss Ottoway comes home Marjory will be cared for. Be sure and tell her I left her with many wishes for her happiness. Good-bye."

She dropped upon her knees when he was gone, and was kneeling, her face buried in her hands, when a soft, caressing voice startled her as from a sleep.

"Oh, Marjory, Marjory! What has happened? Have I been dreaming?"

"They are asking for you to speak again. When you signed that paper so many believed who have been holding back! A woman has confessed a murder she committed in England seven years ago,* and a rich man has thrown a

* Such a thing happened in the excitement.

full wallet upon the platform, and another has given his gold watch, and many of the women their jewelry. The excitement is beyond everything, and they are asking for you."

"I cannot go quite yet, my child," holding Marjory in close embrace. "What if we have miscalculated, and I am penniless! oh, Marjory! my faith wavers. I feel like one stunned by a blow."

Marjory was unprepared for such weakness in the bulwark of her confidence, and was undergoing what the subalterns of the greatest heroes must occasionally experience if permitted intimacy with their leaders, revelations of supineness in the tent, when the world is hoarse with shouting "bravo!" outside. How could she inspire Letitia Barkenstone? Surely not by telling her that she was continually haunted by a sickening mistrust that possibly their midnight cry was a "much ado about nothing," after all. If Letitia Barkenstone were beginning to doubt—well, she wished she were safe at home. Had they not better go to the old house for the night?

"But the day will not go by, Marjory." The rock was under her feet again. "He will not

lie. He hath permitted Satan to put it into the heart of my brother to entrap me in this manner, that I may be tried as by fire."

"I don't see how you could sign it," said Marjory. "I never could have done it. But then he is your brother, and he will be honorable. He thinks we are crazy fanatics, and"—lowering her voice, a faint ring of her merry old laughter following her words—"perhaps we are."

"Marjory!"

"One can't help their thoughts sometimes," with a deep sigh.

"Get thee behind her, Satan!" and scarcely had she uttered the words when from the thicket behind them a form emerged, startling Marjory into a low, frightened cry.

"Is her name Marjory?" and in the light of the tent lamps they could see the eager expectancy in the strange face, the unkempt hair, and long ragged beard, the bulging carpet-bag, and the chart—a Millerite pilgrim, and as such deserving their welcome. "I am looking for Marjory Burke. Can this be my daughter? Does she remember her father?"

CHAPTER XX.

WINDS OF DOCTRINE.

THERE was nothing extraordinary in Christopher Burke's experience, the story explaining his long absence as he first told it to his little family. But by the time that story had been made to harmonize with Annie Burke's visions and to fulfil ancient prophecy, it became marvellous indeed.

He had simply borrowed the meeting house fund, confident that he might replace it upon his return from New York, where he counted upon the temporary assistance of his kinsfolk. The Burke convention had been a failure. A few members of the family who did not believe the advertisement in the London *Times* to be a trickster's scheme had prevailed upon Christopher Burke to go to London at once and attend to the matter himself. They would forward money when needed. He had but three hours in which to make his decision. He sailed from

New York, bewildered and full of remorse. Annie would forgive him, however, when he returned a rich man, abundantly able to wipe out his disgrace. The London barristers smiled at his presumption in addressing them without a heavy retainer. They drove him from their offices. He begged for money from his New York cousins. No reply. With a desperate fatality for securing rebuffs, even insults, he hung around the Bank of England, and annoyed the officials until the police placed him under surveillance. He plodded wearily on foot to find the Kentish Burkes, demanding admittance at the doors of their fine country houses in the name of an American cousin, a rightful inheritor of their lands. It was pitiful to see him pleading with inexorable servants for admission, wandering among the old graves in old church-yards—family graves—shivering in the parish churches, where he copied long inscriptions from memorial tablets and entries of musty parish registers, every link he could find in the Burke ancestral chain. Penniless and in despair he found employment at last as under-gardener on the estate of an eccentric old gentleman, a hypochondriac hermit, who, having

become interested in the teachings of William Miller, chiefly because of what he thought the world deserved for its worthlessness, found a querulous satisfaction in expounding the same to the wellspoken man hoeing his turnips: a man, by the way, who surprised him by his knowledge of Scripture, and who was at once converted to Father Miller's teaching, when permitted to study those teachings in his master's library. There is no telling what the associate students might have done for the conversion of the good people of Kent, had not the sudden death of the old gentleman sent Christopher Burke adrift upon the world again, his carefully hoarded savings barely sufficient to take him back to his wife and child—to whom he would have returned before, but that he had cause for believing that his master would leave him a legacy. And why had he not written? He had never had the heart, the courage, to write. He had expected to meet Priscilla Ottoway at Happy Valley. What wonder that he had been unwilling to wait an hour longer than he thought necessary! Time was short. He had feared the trumpet would sound before he was permitted to meet his wife and child, and warn

them, if they were in darkness, of what was coming upon the earth. The Lord had been very good to him, he declared. Blessed were the bitter waters of Marah, that led to the wells of Elim. Marjory's heart went out to him at once. He was her father, the father she remembered in the old coffin shop in The Hollow, and that was enough for Marjory.

But where was Priscilla Ottoway?

Christopher Burke's journey from Happy Valley, where he had failed to meet her, had been one of detentions. He could not refrain from stopping to proclaim the Midnight Cry in many a lonely place where the warning had not been given. There was nothing alarming in his failing to see her, as much of her journey was by stage, and the connections were dependent upon uncertain things. Phil was more anxious than he betrayed to any one, and he comforted himself with believing that she was visiting old friends and would be home on each to-morrow.

One day there came a cry for the big tent from a Macedonia some eighty miles to the westward—a cry so clearly a command from on high to the leaders of the host, that the

removal was made at once, the multitude following, excepting Letitia Barkenstone and Christopher and Annie Burke. They had been "called" to hasten to the Hollow and snatch, if possible, a few of the preacher's old flock from the impending burning. The call had come to Christopher Burke in a dream, and he could hardly wait for the day-dawn before setting forth on his return to a people he had deserted in the wilderness. Did they revile him, cast the past in his teeth, it should not be written against him that he had not striven to make atonement for that past.

It was Phil that prevented Marjory from going with them. He stoutly opposed it and had his own way in the end. She simply should not go. Aunt Prissy would be home on the morrow, he said, as he aided the departure of the others. Marjory must stay, and she did.

The old-time peace enfolded the house again. How sweet the silence down on the camp ground, the roads free from the wagons of the pilgrims, the orchards from their uncared-for children! The nights were still once more, awfully still, thought Marjory, gazing up at

the heavens, trembling lest there should be "a sign" vouchsafed her. In the lull, the reaction following the excitement, she was like one recovering from fever. She moved about languidly, said little, and read incessantly from her Bible. She would have hard work in proving steadfast, she feared. How frightfully fast the days went by. She counted the hours with sinking heart.

Victoria Barry came often to see her, insisting on her going for long drives, when she would chatter about the novels she was reading, the spicy doings of the villagers, and even read to her the pretty things the papers were overladen with, stories about Millerites and their queer delusions, and the retorts of the ungodly when exhorted to repent. Cousin Vic was a pitiless scoffer, to whom the destruction of Jerusalem and even the Battle of Armageddon were of small moment. She habitually spoke of Letitia Barkenstone as Deborah of Armageddon. Her impersonation of her as an expositor of prophecy for Marjory's benefit solely, gave the child, who could not help laughing at the caricature, many pangs of stinging remorse.

Phil, in the phraseology Marjory had learned

to repeat when speaking of him, "had hardened his heart lest he should believe," but he did not ridicule her nor argue with her. In fact, he was so kind and mindful of her comfort, that when he declared his open interference with her father's wish that she should go with him to the Hollow, she took sides with Phil, and Christopher Burke, who deferred to "the boy," as he called him, left her behind with many misgivings lest she should not cling to her faith without wavering, but be blown about by every wind of doctrine.

"Winds of doctrine!" mused Marjory, watching the course of the rising wind across the cornfield below her window, the trees bending before it, a rain of half-ripened apples in the orchard—"it has been nothing but a high wind of doctrine, a perfect tornado, all summer. How can one help being blown about, blown away? If one only could be blown away, far up and away from the earth, before the fire breaks out," her eyes following a leaf scurrying upward on the gale, "and so escape the wrath of that terrible God, what a blessed wind that would be!"

Every day brought her a long letter from

Letitia Barkenstone. A new scheme was growing in that visionary brain, or, as Letitia Barkenstone would have said, a new light was revealing itself in prophecy. It was gradually dawning upon her that she had been raised up in the fulness of time to make ready the literal Zion, modern Palestine, for the return of the Messiah.

"If time shall be prolonged"—the "if" lightly underscored—"I shall go at once to Palestine and devote myself to a mission having for its object the cultivation of the soil, the establishment of an agricultural school upon the ashes of Zion, among the ruins of Jerusalem. A few laboring and devoted Christians are ready to co-operate with me in cultivating and building up the waste places, in comforting the captive daughter of Israel. The day of preparation of making Palestine as the garden of the Lord must precede, it seems revealed to me, His coming. But this may be a delusion to shake our faith in 'the tenth day.' I am studying the subject with prayer, and while dwelling upon it last night the following verses were whispered in my ear:

"'Oh! who shall between the bright cherubims pass,
And restore the lost garden of beauty at last?
Who shall give to its long desert bowers their bloom,
And say to the saved and the ransomed, return?'

It will all be clear to us in a few days, Marjory. If I go to Palestine I shall take you with me."

That was something to dream of, something beyond that fatal tenth day! But where was Aunt Prissy?

CHAPTER XXI.

HAPPY VALLEY.

PRISCILLA OTTOWAY'S journey had been greatly prolonged by delays and mishaps, and the last thirty miles found her a solitary passenger by night in the mountain wagon, slowly climbing the steep hill which shut away Happy Valley on the northward from the naughty world beyond its protecting mountains. The rain was falling in no fitful mood, but with a steady persistence that shut out every other sound of the dismal night saving the lugubrious crooning of the driver outside, who sang over and over in every possible key attainable by his cracked, wailing voice—

> "Oh, mother, mother, make my bed,
> For I shall die to-morrow!"

At last, when she too had been singing of Barbara Allen's woe in her broken dream, the sound of the wheels upon the stony descent of the hill aroused her. She knew without lifting

the curtain just where they were—not a mile from the village. She could see without opening her eyes the white fence around the graveyard out there in the pitchy darkness, the old tombstones peering at her through the brambles, their faces far less changed by the years than her own; yes, that was the moaning of the great black pine, whispering down to the two sunken graves at its roots, "She has come back at last." Then all the rain that was falling seemed beating upon those two graves. She knew just when the horses' hoofs would strike the bridge, and the old echo would rise from the ravine, and when they would have reached the open space across which Grandfather Hathaway's cobble-stone house could be plainly seen—the white shutters, and the great barns. The stage rolled over the bridge, and she saw a brown-faced child hanging over the railing in the full sunshine, that little outlaw among the good Quaker boys and girls, that defiant rebel against Quaker law and Quaker custom. "Come here, Priscilla," the old, sweet voice was calling; and she was hastening to obey, so glad to go home, so tired, when—ah! it was the driver swinging a lantern before her dazed eyes, help-

ing a stiff and confused old woman to alight with her hand-bags and wraps, the cold rain beating against her face.

The little inn did its best to make her comfortable, the landlady herself leaving her bed when told what a "fine-seeming lady" had arrived, evidently some relation of old Deborah Hathaway's, for she had asked after her and the Hathaways generally. As the house belonged to Deborah Hathaway, it was wise to make much of her visitors. So a fire was soon blazing on the hearth of the pretty bed-room, and Priscilla Ottoway was enjoying a savory chop beside it, the landlady eyeing her with not a little deferential curiosity as she made pretence of being busy about the room.

"And you say Deborah Hathaway is still living. Is she very feeble? Is her memory good?"

"Trust her for 'membering everything as well as ever she did. She was ninety-two this summer, and she keeps straight as an arrow. If she's ever seen you before, she'll know you." The tone was interrogatory, but Priscilla Ottoway made no response. "I saw her picking grapes in her garden only yesterday. She

looks after the grapes and everything, and she owns acres and acres of the best land around here, perhaps you know"—another unsatisfactory pause. "You can't find a deed in this section that don't have Hathaway on it. This is an old Quaker settlement, you know. There's no going astray from broad-brims around here."

"Have you many guests in the house?"

"No, ma'am. No one jis now. It's dull after harvest. Then there's another stage comes up the Grass hill road."

"But you have direct communication from Philadelphia?"

"Oh, yes! you can go and back in twenty-four hours. There's a mail every day, the office right here in the house."

"Will you see at once if there is a letter—"

But the landlady briskly interrupted her to declare that there was nothing whatever in the office, she knew, for she had charge of the mail—regretting afterwards that she had prevented the lady from giving her name.

"And has there been no one stopping here lately by the name of Christopher Burke?"

No, there had been no one there by that name; of that she was positive. She had

brought a footstool for the poor lady's feet, as she told the story, and was attending to her requests for the night, when she was startled by hearing her give a quick cry of pain, followed by a moaning effort to call somebody by name. "And then she fell forward," said the good woman who caught her in her arms, "and lay like the dead."

"We can find out who she is, I am thinking, at Deborah Hathaway's," said she, after the excitement had somewhat subsided, and the village doctor and several neighbors were consulting what should be done—for the strange lady lay in an alarming stupor. "She asked about her when she first came in, and don't you see something like the Hathaways in her face?"

"Oh, pow'ful sakes alive!" gasped Dolly Cobb, the village nurse, when she had finally made out the name on the daintily embroidered handkerchief, "it's Priscilla Ottoway! and to think I didn't know her! Prissy Ottoway, sure's I'se a livin' soul"—bending close to the strong, placid face. "Of course it's Prissy," rubbing the limp hands vigorously. "Didn't we go to school together? Didn't they used to

call us the gypsys? She'll know me, if she ever wakes out of this; but Lord sakes alive! where has she been to? They said she killed herself years ago," lowering her voice to a whisper, "and all for some poor stick of a man, a Spanish count or something. I said then Priscilla Ottoway wasn't fool enough to drown herself for any man livin'; there's those livin' who can remember my sayin' it; and here she is, cum back from the dead, if she isn't dead already; oh, Lud sakes alive!"

Day after day she lay there unconscious of everything about her. Her friends could not be informed of her condition, for no one knew who or where they were. Deborah Hathaway would not hear of inserting a notice in a Philadelphia paper. She believed it would be contrary to the wishes of her kinswoman. No letters came. How strange it was! She had a good physician, and Dolly Cobb was her faithful nurse, but it was very doubtful if she would ever recover. Deborah Hathaway at last decided that she must be removed to her house, planning and superintending the removal herself, upon a low-canopied stone-boat, drawn by two steady old oxen.

What a great white room it was, where they laid her down so tenderly! Dolly, fairly terrified by the converging lines in her old playmate's history, that she saw terminating under the canopy of that high-posted bed, the room in which Prissy Ottoway was born, where she kissed her mother for the last time, and where she met her brother. When Dolly Cobb followed her through that door, she gave her up; in fact, she had her doubts if her flitting would not be something more uncanny than anything she had ever seen in her life; and Dolly never would have admitted that her life had been uneventful and prosaic.

"It sims-ter-me this room has jus' been waitin' for all this to happen ever since it was first put to rights; for some rooms are like story books—if it wusn't for the last chapter they'd never cum to anything. This room's bin comin' to this for mor'n sixty years. It's what it's made for."

Verily it was a chamber of peace—so white, so orderly, so prim—a faint odor of lavender in the bed linen, a trimming of hand-knitted lace on the snowy dimity curtains, the bed valance, and the by-no-means lavish supply of pin-cushion,

a compact, complete pin-cushion, which, like everything else in the room, as well as the house, was not only an expression of Deborah Hathaway's Quakerish taste, but seemed so much a part of her, even Deborah Hathaway herself, that Dolly Cobb, not unlike other world's people under that impression, would have as soon presumed upon correcting the old lady's Quaker vernacular as to have changed the location of a single article of furniture, a rug or a footstool, from the place it had been predestined to occupy, and which it seemed to occupy with a sentient satisfaction that it had never known a speck of dust and never would. The black chairs, unrelenting in aspect, somehow suggested that they were indigenous to the spotless white-ash floor, as the tall poplars outside were to the straight lane leading to the high, narrow stoop, and as truly the flowering of severe order, as the vagabond sumach over in the swamp were of a lawless tendency in nature. Four windows, thirty-six panes of glass in each, and never a blemish in a single pane, looked off to the gray hills, four pictures for the otherwise bare white walls that Quaker asceticism might not prohibit. Beyond

the frowning headland to the westward, how plainly Dolly could see it when watching by that silent pillow! was the headland she fancied the leader of all the hills, stepping to the front in an invasion of the shrinking valley, stamping its foot upon a frightened little stream that tried to hide, and nearly succeeded, among the rocks; and over there were the ruins of the little mission chapel built by the Church of England years before.

"We ought to have been expectin' her, and knowin' she would come," Dolly said, breaking into a prolonged meditation of the venerable Quakeress whose faded blue eyes were longer than usual in regaining earthly vision. "If she does die before we find out anything about her I do hope there won't be anybody here that will go remorsing 'round, trying to find out where she came from. I can read all I want to on her face."

She came back to feeble consciousness at last, so slowly that there was no surprise at her surroundings, at Aunt Deborah knitting beside her, at Dolly Cobb, who was plainly not a stranger. There was no mistaking her unexpressed wish not to be questioned about her-

self, and her physician had rare skill in learning the nature of her malady without irritating her mental peace. It was when they would cautiously try to learn to whom they should write, if to any one, that she became painfully bewildered and seemed likely to slip away again.

"It will come in due season," said Deborah Hathaway. "The Lord is holding her up. He has led her here. What He hath hidden we shall never know."

Little by little, in her gleams of consciousness, much of her story was revealed or guessed by Aunt Deborah. The waters of the world had been bitter. There was no pressing insistence for names. She was trying to call someone occasionally, the physician dreading undue stimulus of her suspended memory. Not a word of her faint rambling monologues were unnoted, when she seemed cautiously testing the reality of things around her, trying the strength of the brittle threads by which she would bridge the past with the present. Her radiant smile upon waking one morning, a little more than a fortnight after her arrival at Happy Valley, was in marked contrast with what her watchers had seen before, and Deborah

Hathaway, who entered the room that minute to offer her petition with the sun rising, as was her custom, paused at the foot of the bed, and uplifting her withered hand shut fast the dim eyes that had plainly seen what they were unprepared to meet, and began in a hushed whisper her communion with the Invisible.

"Come Thou into our prison house, and break the chains that hold us back from Thee! Let the immortal be born of death, the palsied tongue free to sing thy love. Let not thine hand spare, nor thine eyes soften until Thou hast made of us all Thou wouldst have us to be!"

"Amen," faintly said Priscilla Ottoway.

"Yea, amen!"—betraying no surprise, quietly taking the seat beside the bed, with a significant sign. Dolly, who stood like one transfixed, was quick in interpreting—"Thee's mending, Priscilla."

"Did I write the letter, Deborah? Did I write to Marjory?"

"Thee didst not." Dolly had written the name.

"I must write"—contracting her brow.

"Thee canst not, Priscilla. Dolly will write

for thee, when it comes to thee, without wrestling with thy memory—which were a sin—to tell us where Marjory lives. Wait upon the Lord, Priscilla. He will whisper the word in good time. We can wait."

There was a bewildered gaze around the room, a restless, aimless flight from one object to another; then the eyelids fell wearily, to lie unlifted several moments.

"Wait upon the Lord, Priscilla."

"Barley Flats," she seemed murmuring in her sleep, a sweet smile lighting up her face. "I can see the valley—the tents are gone—"

"Can you see the mountain?" asked Deborah.

"Mountain?" with a ripple of laughter; "mountains in the Genesee Valley!—I told Phil I would write—There!"—opening her eyes suddenly and uplifting both her hands. "Is it over with? Has the day gone by?" turning to Dolly, as if she could answer.

"This is the third week in the ninth month, Priscilla."

She paid no heed. "'Tenth day, seventh month,'" groping in the darkness of her memory, saying the words over several times question-

ingly, her feverish hold upon her memory quickening, then failing, until she apparently lost her clue entirely and lay gazing intently at the tranquil face beside her, starting suddenly as if aroused by an unexpected voice out of the darkness and she were repeating what she heard.

"Phil and Marjory! Marjory Burke! I must go home to-night—back to Barley Flats."

"Now thee canst write a letter, Dolly; tell them Priscilla Ottoway is in good hands, and why thee did not write before."

"Happy Valley—Happy Valley," the sick woman was half whispering to herself, gliding into rapid, almost incoherent conversation with some fancied personage, her father, her mother, or old grandmother Hathaway, whose caraway cakes she might not taste until she had repeated, with a childish satisfaction—

"'George Fox, George Fox,
The mountain of rocks
Was thy shield in the hot day of battle.
At the flash of thy sword,
In the name of the Lord,
Thy foes were as dumb, driven cattle!
William Penn, William Penn,
In the annals of men—'"

The thread of her recollection broke again, and

the solemn ticking of the old clock in the hall, and the plaint of the cat-birds in the apple trees down in the orchard alone broke the stillness in which she sank to sleep, so like a tired child.

Then while Deborah went for her daily walk down the long, straight lane leading to the highway, Dolly labored with her composition of a letter. The construction of sentences was a serious matter, considering she did not know just whom she was addressing; but rhetoric was nothing to orthography, and poor Dolly's sorrows with the little dictionary delayed the mailing of her letter until after the stage had gone. It were better, she thought, that the letter should be delayed than that "affectionately" should have been spelled as it necessarily had been but for her persistent search through the *f*s, the *e*s, and at last the *a*s; though what had led her to look in the *a*s she could not say; it was just where she had never thought of looking.

"Not until everything is over, Deborah," she heard in the sick room, as she paused outside the open door, Priscilla Ottoway's voice, firm and wondrously sweet, "you are not to write to them until everything is over."

Deborah was holding her hand; her open Bible was on the little stand beside the bed. The afternoon sun filled the room with a golden light, for the blinds had been swung wide, something that had not happened before at that hour of the day. The faces of the two kinswomen were strangely illuminated, Dolly thought. Their joyfulness impressed her first; then she knew the whole.

"It is just as I would have it, Deborah. They shall hear I am gone—when all is over. I have slipped out of their lives never to come back, that is all. No funeral for them, no weeping over my dead face, only the knowing I am gone. No, you must not send for the doctor."

The spasm of agony had passed, leaving her mind clearer than before. "The end is come," smiling serenely, "and I am so glad it finds me here. You have been so kind to me! I knew more at times than you thought, but I could not speak. It was just as well. Phil and Marjory are like my own children. They know what I would have them do for each other. Lay me down at the foot of the old pine tree. Then let them come, Phil and Marjory."

Not long after, when all was over and a sacred quiet enfolded the house, so like the peace of the covered face in the western chamber, the doctor came in bringing a letter he had found at the post-office for Priscilla Ottoway. He had also a few pine cones that he had picked up when he passed the old graveyard, thinking they might gently stimulate reviving memory.

"She's gone, Doctor Talcott," sobbed Dolly Cobb, "unless she's only sleeping—as it looks she is."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DAY AND THE HOUR.

THE letter was from Phil. If they did not hear from her soon he should go in search of her. The old house was quiet again, very quiet. Then he told her of the arrival of Christopher Burke, and his departure with his wife and Letitia Barkenstone, a summary of all that had happened in her absence, without comment or waste of words. Marjory would not be herself, of course, until "the tenth day" was well over. He meant to deceive her somehow as to the date, bewilder her calculations as to the calendar, surprise her some morning by telling her that "the day" was gone by; she need live in dread of it no longer. He counted on Aunt Priscilla's help in misleading her when she came home, which he hoped would be very soon. They would have to tamper with Marjory's correspondence, hold back Miss Barkenstone's long letters. Happily

her father and mother were too preoccupied to write often.

"They will be coming back here soon, of course. I like Christopher Burke, he means to be honest; he seems to think Marjory is about five years old. He shall have a piece of my share of the farm, and we will build him a snug house. If you are not coming home soon, send for Marjory. That will help drive this nonsense from her mind."

"Yea, Dolly, she shall have Friends' burial," said Deborah, when she had read the letter softly aloud in the western chamber. "She came back in world's garb, but she is a Hathaway. She shall go to her grave as her kin have before her. Give her my best cap and kerchief, Dolly. Rebecca Springer shall speak at her funeral, and may the spirit touch her lips as it did when Priscilla's mother died. Nay! nay!"—sternly —"Marjory and Philip may not be here. That was Priscilla's requirement. Priscilla was a Hathaway and had her own mind."

* * * * * *

"This is a world's end for us, Marjory."

They stood side by side, looking down upon the new-made grave under the old pine tree.

"Oh, Phil!" sobbing and clinging closer to his arm, "are we never to find her again?"

There came no answer. Phil, dumb and tearless as he had been since the stroke, made no attempt at consolation. It was not in him to offer visionary wishes for certainties, and dreams for divine revelation; nor was he so heartless as to bid her turn for comfort to the faith that had shrivelled her happiness.

Their stay in Happy Valley was of but a few days. Deborah Hathaway understood perfectly why they could not consent to remain longer, and gave them her blessing at parting. They would come to her again, she trusted, before she went to join Priscilla. She had not long to stay. Perhaps, if she lingered, they would come to Happy Valley in the midwinter; the days would be somewhat long for her, waiting there alone.

Marjory had been holding controversy with her uneasy conscience, as to her duty in professing her faith to Aunt Deborah. She must not play the coward, the hypocrite.

"Have you not yet heard," she found courage to ask, "that the world is coming to an end before next winter?"

"Nay, friend Marjory," a twinkle in the dim eyes, a prolonged, half-amused study of the flushed face "the spirit hath not yet revealed such a message to me. How hath He spoken with thee, friend Marjory? I have heard that such doctrine is taught in the babel of the world, but the still small voice that speaks with me here tells me nothing of the kind; and I have been given a ready perception of truth. Did this message come to thee from within, friend Marjory? Does thee know that what thee has heard is verily the voice of the spirit? Let me speak to thee for Priscilla, and bid thee stay here with me, until it is plain unto thee if thee is vexed with delusions or nay?"

But she would go back with Phil. It was upon the last day of their uneventful journey, when they were not many miles from home, and when Phil, because of her long silence, was believing that she had forgotten his existence, that she quietly slipped a letter into his hand, a worn, rumpled letter, one she received not long before they went away, he remembered taking it from the office, the superscription in Samuel Breckinridge's writing, plainly enough.

"Please read it, Phil."

"You can tell me all there is in it that I care to know," passively submitting to let it remain in his hand.

"But I want you to read it," with her old imperiousness, settling back composedly, as if the matter were decided. "Read it aloud, please. You are so determined not to think well of Mr. Breckinridge."

Phil opened the letter mechanically, skimming its contents hastily.

"There, now, read more slowly and distinctly. I want to hear how it sounds from some one else, as if somebody besides Mr. Breckinridge were saying what he does." Phil read—"The sirocco of this fanaticism will soon be spent. Until 'the day' is gone by and all things continue as they were, I am a hopeless scoffer in your eyes, one of those 'brands' nothing may pluck from the burning. But when the day is gone by, and I thank a merciful heaven it soon will be, strike out from the wreck, my child, and get clear from the sinking ship. Don't trust yourself to any of the crazy rafts bound to finish the voyage. My sister has the material of one of those rafts, a mission to Palestine for the agricultural education of the Jews, as she

has misgivings even at this, the eleventh hour, if the 'coming' can come until the literal Zion has been made ready for the arrival. She is doubting if she should not have gone to Palestine a few years ago, to convert the land, if not the remnant of the chosen people, into something very different from what it is to-day. The fact that Palestine is barren, rather than fertile, is a fact she did not consider in due season, although for the life of me I cannot understand why a vast amount of money and labor should be expended as a preparation for an inevitable conflagration. But then there are many other things of this nature that I do not understand. One is, why you should have been drawn into this vortex of delusion. I think of you with sincere pity, and when the day is gone by and this hideous nightmare of fanaticism is ended, I shall do all in my power to erase it from your memory. I am sure Miss Ottoway will consent to your going to Cousin Beth in Philadelphia this winter, for CousinBeth is to preside in my household, which will include Cousin Vic and several charming young ladies you will be pleased to know; and I am sure you will be very thankful, before your gay

winter is over, that the end is not yet. My sister, of course, will be in the Holy Land, and I shall undoubtedly be with her.

"I can understand the 'coming' Cousin Beth speaks of, in her still, small voice. '*Wherever the Lord is, there is heaven.*' That is a coming I understand, not this horrible demoniac scourge, this conception of a Creator creating for wrath and destruction, the outcome, perhaps, of the old Jewish conception of God, the Jewish inability to accept the Mystic Bread in place of an Avenger of national wrongs. But pardon me, child, you have no lack of preaching already. The end is at hand. Be of good cheer. Old things shall pass away; all things shall become new."

"What day of the month is it, Phil? It seems so long ago since that letter came, and we started for Happy Valley!"

"Don't you see the purple asters, Marjory, and the thistledown?"

"Yes, it must be September. How time is creeping on," her mouth growing rigid, a tremor stealing over her.

"Promise me one thing, Marjory"—his voice was husky and low, and he turned res-

olutely from her and looked out of the window. The horses were slowly climbing the long hill not far from the village, their journey's end. "Promise me you will try to forget all about that day, to let me help you to forget it."

"But I must not, Phil," laying her hand on his shoulder, and he could not escape confronting her distressed, pleading eyes "I must not let that day come upon us unawares, I must be watching, waiting, longing for it to come."

"Stuff and nonsense!" growled Phil, quick to regret the hurt he gave her. "How can you talk about longing to see such a day? You know you don't, unless you are in haste to see the last of some of us. Yes, you must be longing to be well rid of—" He had not the courage, the cruelty to finish his sentence; but he might as well have done so. And the look she gave him wrung his heart.

The driver's horn broke in, the loud, clear blast telling them they would soon be at home. Phil took her hand and she let it lie in his, until the stage came to a stand-still at the post-office door.

"Them Ottoways is hum from the buryin',"

was soon circulated throughout the village, "and never a thread of black on either of 'em." "Well," sighed the village milliner, "according to that girl's notion, and who'd a thought that wild thing had ever gone into Millerism, it's precious little while she'll be wanting a black bonnet or any other, tho' I should think they'd all want black bonnets; would want to go into mourning beforehand for what they can't mourn for when it's over with."

Old Merit, however, had a superlatively wide weed on his white Sunday hat, and his knotted hands were encased in black gloves; for he was waiting for "the chillen," as he had waited nearly every day since they went away. The first thing Marjory saw was his sorrowful face, as he hobbled hurriedly to open the stage door, his mouth twitching convulsively, but uttering no intelligible sound. He hastened them to the carriage and drove them away, mournfully shaking his head, suddenly checking the speed of his horses when they were well outside the village, to hold them to a funeral walk; for in old Merit's imagination a hearse was preceding that return to the old house. The dogs came bounding across the meadow, barking a joyous

welcome, in which the low-flying swallows seemed to participate, the shadow of the old house in the setting sun meeting them as far from the deserted porch as it could; America striding slowly down the foot-path, her arms hanging like weights by her side.

"Oh, Phil! will it never be the same home again?"

"Never, Marjory; that world has had its ending forever."

CHAPTER XXIII.

AND IT CAME TO PASS.

ELIZABETH CULBERTSON and Letitia Barkenstone consented to act as guardians of Marjory Burke. Marjory's choice of the latter had met with no little opposition, but the appointment had finally been made, and that chiefly through the influence of Elizabeth Culbertson, who had hastened to Barley Flats and spent several weeks with Marjory, comforting her as no one else could.

Happily for Marjory, that part of the doomed world which lay in the vicinity of Mills Hollow had a claim upon Christopher Burke which made his ignoring its salvation at that critical crisis something not to be considered. Marjory had dropped the first letter she received from the evangelists after her return from Happy Valley before she had read the first page, shocked and repelled by the consolations of the faith in which she had professed confi-

dence. What an ogre her sacred sorrow showed it to be!

She could only sit dumb and wounded before it, confronting it, for she would not confess the half-unconscious discovery of its hideousness. Phil picked up the letter. He saw it all, and he not only read, but answered it. Marjory was going away for a few weeks, he wrote, without saying where, and when all was over, a home awaited Christopher Burke and his wife on the old farm.

The Hermitage was to be closed for the winter; but Victoria Barry was there superintending some changes, and the two households had naturally become as one. Marjory, without further allusion to the subject, understood the design of those around her, to keep her in ignorance of the day of the month, even the month itself, and she had not the faintest desire to defeat their plans, never seeming to note the absence of newspapers, even the removal of the almanac from its time-honored place below the kitchen clock. No one spoke of the fanaticism, nor did Cousin Beth, in their many helpful talks together, essay indirectly to show her how mistaken she had been. And Marjory, thankful

for their tender silence, brooded far more than they were aware upon the marked change in her life, the terrible fear of that approaching day, the sickening dread, at each sunsetting, of the outburst of the last trumpet before the morning should dawn, making the close of each day to her like the sunsetting to one who hears the building of his scaffold in the prison-yard below his cell.

"I tell you she don't really believe it," said Victoria Barry, in one of the frequent talks she had with Phil upon the subject.

"Yes, she does. Don't you see how thin and pale she is? We must get her away from here. She knows it is October. Don't the leaves tell that?"

"I wish I might tell her about old Miss Parsons. She believes, you know, or says she does, that she is going up on the tenth day, just four days from this. I went to see her yesterday and begged her to go and take care of that poor fellow put off from a canal boat yesterday with the smallpox. He lies up there in a shanty and only for old Jake would die of neglect. Think she would go? No, indeed! She seemed to think it would be highly improper for her to

expose herself to a contagious disease, to go up with such taint in her garment."

But Marjory was convalescing, notwithstanding her constant self-accusation of backsliding. Her elastic mind was surely gaining equilibrium. Her better judgment was asserting itself—or, let us say, her native common sense. Naturally she shrank from meeting those she had exhorted so eloquently, the unconverted, still eager to hear her again. One gray-headed old farmer who lived on the State Road, where she once liked best to ride, haunted her thoughts, and she often asked herself if he were not a true prophet. She could not forget how he had smiled, when she saw him in the wheat-field that day, and rebuked him with a marvellous flow of Scriptural denunciation, for garnering against the burning; how he had listened with an admiring twinkle in his eye, and then took Nan by the bit and drawled out:

"Now let me tell you, sissy, Millerism is a pooty high hoss for a gal like you to be ridin'. It's a kind of a circus, sissy, bareback ridin' of Scriptur', without any bridle to steer by; kind of gallopin' round the prophecies, comin' up nobody knows whar. It's a pooty good show,

providin' it don't cost too much. Now I'm an old Presbyterian deacon, and I try to be a gospel Christian. Le' me give you an old man's advisin'. If you're mind to make the gospel journey, git up into the reg'lar chariot," pointing to the meeting house steeple. "That's better than gallopin' over Miller's sawdust."

She had not cared to see that old farmer since she came back from Happy Valley. And how fast the days were going, the autumn creeping on. Would it come?

The ninth day of the seventh month! The sunsetting thereof found Marjory at the Hermitage, a dismal night outside, the rain pouring down, but within all cheer and unusual activity. The house would be closed on the morrow, and the last box was packed, the carpets up, the curtains down; but the fire blazed in the great fireplace, and three tired women sat toasting their toes before it, complacently reviewing all they had accomplished since the morning, assuring each other that all was done as it should be.

"It won't be long till next summer," said Cousin Beth. "To-morrow is Christmas, and day after to-morrow the trailing arbutus will be blossoming out there in the wood."

"And next week we shall be out on the piazza again," added Cousin Vic. "By-the-bye, we must tell Phil to send Poll-Betsey on to us with Jacko. Don't let me forget that."

"Yes, we owe something to Poll-Betsey," breaking her abstraction to look smilingly at Marjory, who was far away and did not hear, her face revealing what it pained Cousin Beth to see. The wind was rising, the rain pouring down, the sound of its beating on the piazza roof drowning their voices.

"We shall have pleasant weather when this is over," raising her voice; but Marjory did not hear. "We must drive over to the Shaker Community before we go to Philadelphia; I want to hear Sister Ann's story again."

"Pity we couldn't all turn Shakers," and Victoria Barry sighed deeply. "The poke-bonnet is my temptation to join them, and the dancing. I should like that, unless the old elders lagged and droned as they sometimes do. A lukewarm Shaker is to be pitied. Think of having to go around and around that room, twanging those hymns, when your heels as well as your heart are like lead. Dreadful! One must be sure of con-

version before one enlists under Mother Ann."

There was a heavy footstep in the porch. Marjory recognized it at once, and sprang to open the door.

"I was thinking how lonesome you would be all alone here to-night." Pepper and Fan were close at Phil's heels. They would never have followed him had Aunt Prissy been sitting by their rug. Yes, they must come in, Marjory's tears falling on their silky heads. Was it not going to be a dreadful night?

"Possibly," said Phil stolidly, taking off his great coat, a troubled glance at Marjory's face. Could it be that she knew what night it was? "I thought I'd come and see that you were all right over here. These new-fangled houses are not always to be trusted in a high wind, unless they are looked after. Did you fasten the turret windows?" following the maid into the kitchen, for he had seen her frightened face and divined the cause.

"And is the world coming to an end to-night?" piteously whined Katie, wringing her hands. "Everybody is talking about it, and really it seems like it is coming."

If he did not quiet her fears he made it plain that she was not to betray them in the parlor. He made fast the shutters and doors, and having put out the kitchen fire, took precautionary measures with the one before which the ladies were gathered. Stealthily and as if suppressing a gathering rage at restraint, the wind was creeping across the wide valley, the great trees around the house shivering at its approach. Long, ominous whistles, ending in shrieks, made the empty rooms around them seem peopled with demons. The dogs sat with up-pricked ears, growling when the windows were shaken, and the smoke came down the chimney in angry gusts. The frightened servants ran in from the kitchen, and before they could be silenced, had ejaculated, in their terror, the prayers which Marjory at least was quick to hear. It had come; and with her conviction the wind struck the house. Pepper gave an unearthly howl, poor dog, and a dead branch of the oak overhanging the roof was hurled against the window, shivering the glass. The incoming tornado dashed a map from the wall and extinguished the candles. Phil was quick to throw the ashes over the fire, deadening it com-

pletely, before he could attend to Marjory, whose low, frightened cry had not escaped his ear. She was lying senseless at his very feet.

For hours she lay unconscious, moaning in her feverish delirium, her piteous prayers revealing her conception of the Avenger who, she believed, had arisen in His wrath to judge the earth. The storm had spent its fury, but was slow to retreat. Marjory would not let go her hold of Phil's hand, and Dennis could not be prevailed upon to go for a physician. The watchers by the poor girl hardly knew when the tempest was past, so lost were they in the whirlwind depicted by that distempered brain, the falling mountains, the flame-scorched river bed, the opening graves, and the cursing heavens.

The soothing monotone of the rain and Cousin Beth's magnetic voice won the victory at last, and Marjory dropped into troubled slumber, lasting only while Cousin Beth was speaking. When the voice stopped, the bewildered eyes would suddenly open and the lurid visions return, so Cousin Beth kept up her even flow of speech, and Phil and Victoria Barry

sustained her as best they could. It mattered little what was said, so that the sound of a voice was unbroken, the assurance that she was not alone with her fears. Naturally they fell to discussing the topic suggested by her illusion, in a guarded manner.

"The worst is over," said Cousin Beth. "Physical and spiritual prostration will follow, but her healthy temperament will assert itself. She will be the stronger for this experience.

"Everything is divine wisdom with Cousin Beth," said Victoria Barry, sniffing hard at the camphor bottle. "The paths of Providence are never too crooked for her faith to make all straight. Nevertheless—" Marjory seemed listening, and faintly smiled when Cousin Beth repeated,

> "'There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
> Would men observingly distil it out."

Near daybreak Phil was climbing the turret stairs to Sam Breckinridge's eyry, not of his own will, but that of Elizabeth Culbertson, who would have him go to bed, now that all was quiet, and the birds were beginning to peep a cheery welcome for "the tenth day," rough-tossed as their nests had been, poor bedraggled

survivors of the storm! From the curtainless windows looking far off over the valley, Phil watched to see the first glimpse of the sun-rising so many terror-stricken souls were yet slow to believe they could ever see again. The sky was wondrously clear, and to him the cold, glittering stars at first seemed colder, more silent, than ever. What strange, weird whispers came out of the black woods, and then how eloquent were the far-off voiceless stars, triumphantly challenging his doubt of their handiwork divine! He could make out dimly the landmarks in the wide landscape stretching far away like a black ocean to the westward. He knew just where the sunrise would find the old chimney, and there his eye rested. How like his life, her life, it lay, wrapped in the darkness! But the night was far spent, the day was at hand.

"When this day is over with," and Phil strode aimlessly around the room, "she'll be her old self again." He could hear Cousin Beth singing in the chamber below, and one of old Merit's worn-out sayings came back to him:

"Angelzes don' allus kum a flyin' outer hebbin. Dey hops up mighty sudden, jis like mushrooms."

CHAPTER XXIV.

AFTER ALL.

AND "the day" went by. All things continued as they were.

"We are still on the shores of mortality," wrote Christopher Burke to Phil, "but He is even at the door. He has given a few days more for the trial of our faith. It is all in accordance with the parable of the ten virgins. When they had arisen and trimmed their lamps, there was still to be a time when the lamps of the unwise virgins would be going out. This could not be without a passing-by of the "tenth day"; until that day their lamps would burn. It must pass by, or when would the foolish have time to give up their faith?"

His hope was unshaken. Not so with Annie Burke; she had no more visions; her gift of prophecy was gone. Neither prayer nor denunciation could rouse her. Marjory had written

begging her to come home. Phil and she were going at once to Happy Valley. Deborah Hathaway had sent for them. She was very ill.

The "old black mammy" carried Annie Burke once more up to the east chamber, and laid her in her old place, under John Wilson's eye. The first snow was falling. She was very tired, she said, and America, who would not leave her that night, crept softly up to her bed at the day-dawn, for she had wakened from her troubled sleep with an ominous misgiving.

She was gone—a gleam of victory lighting up the wan, disappointed face. "Behold He cometh" had been whispered softly for her, at the last, and joyfully had she risen up from her sorrow.

The good country people from far and near filled the old house at that funeral. By many, Annie Burke was regarded with superstitious awe bordering on reverence; for had she not been the subject of a genuine miracle, and had she not exercised the power of healing? Some thought it not unlikely that she was in a trance, and would rise up in her shroud to tell them of things behind the veil. There was an expect-

ation of something marvellous. Phil and Marjory were not there. From Deborah Hathaway's funeral they had gone with Elizabeth Culbertson to Philadelphia, and in their journeyings had happily missed the letter summoning them home; happily, for Christopher Burke said the burial should be a joyful testimony of his faith, and he carried out his will to the letter.

"Why should you mourn?" sternly, to the only ones who wept over the dead, Merit and America. "This is but a separation for a few days at the most, if we, like her, have on our wedding garments."

"Weddin' garments!" blurted out America, "dere bettah be no talk 'bout weddin' garments roun' heah for dis wile! Weddin' garments!" her broad bosom swelling with rage as she edged nearer where he sat reading his Bible, beside the dead. "I'se no use for widdowahs wot talks o' weddin' garments dat way. Can't yer wait till dis chile is under groun'?"

His calmness silenced her. She stood cowed before him. Was he bewitched? Not a tear did he shed, not a sigh escaped his rigidly set lips. Nor was he like one in a dream. He

was awfully awake, at bay with a mighty sorrow that would master him, annihilate his faith the first moment of his yielding to its influence. In the stupendous verity of that speedy release from earthly anguish, perhaps that very day, certainly before many weeks, he found strength in his hour of need.

Letitia Barkenstone had sailed for Palestine, therefore he decided to conduct the services himself, although the clergyman of the village offered to perform the last sad rites for the departed, and for his kindness had been called a false prophet, one who was cunningly seeking opportunity for deceiving the people. No, the occasion should be improved for an impressive declaration of the truth. What a gloomy funeral it was, and that chiefly because death and the dead were so inexorably shut out! The one who was looked upon as the solitary "mourner," was like a phantasmal spectre of ecstasy, his harsh inflexible voice betraying no feeling, as he began the service by reading slowly—

"Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people. Our heart is not turned back, though

Thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered as with the shadow of death. Arise for our help and redeem us, for thy mercy's sake."

The wan face in the plain pine coffin seemed listening for a last message, a recognition, a tender word of farewell, and listening all in vain. What had apocalyptic vision and sure word of prophecy to say to that disappointed mouth, those hollow, yearning eyes? The terrible things written against the earth and the inhabiters thereof were as nothing to what was written on that silent face, and all unnoted by him for whom it had been written.

The fields were white with snow. Merit had dug the grave with his own hands, out in the meadow, beside John Wilson's. America had carefully removed every pebble from the heap of earth, and covered it with boughs from the old pine overhanging the roof.

"I 'lows Miss Annie don't wanter hear dem ston's rattlin' down de las' ting, like as if dat trumphet dey'se bin foolishun' 'bout was blowin', an' she'd got ter git up right 'way. She's nuthin' to git up foh nebber moah, now Miss Prissy's gone, an' Miss Marjory's gwine ter

clar out, an' dat Crisofer Burke can't set fiah ter all creation."

When the Cameron boys carried the coffin from the old house, Christopher Burke walked close behind, and alone, his tearless eyes looking heavenward, his form erect, his head covered. There was an instinctive shrinking from him. Merit and America followed a little distance behind, the dogs beside them, America muttering to herself, her big sunbonnet drawn far over her face, her black shawl wrapped tightly about her. Merit had broken down and was crying like a child, the snow falling on his bared head, his ejaculations revealing the blackness his soul was stumbling through, as they moved slowly across the frozen stubble. Just as the bearers reached the grave the sun broke through the clouds, and the flurrying snow-flakes gambolled wildly in its radiance before disappearing in the depths of the waiting pit.

Then Christopher Burke's voice, still harsh and inflexible, broke the silence, his words smiting the hush enfolding the valley, and bringing forth, as from an untuned harp, text after text of angry denunciation of the an-

cient Jews, snatches of prophetic vision and anathema for the hardened in heart.

Stepping to the verge of the grave when the coffin was lowered, he raised his voice to a higher key:

"And they shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not."

America with a firm grip on Merit's arm had turned from the grave and was dragging him along in her impetuous retreat, the dogs skulking behind them, lagging slower and slower, with wistful looks backward. To the sound of the filling up of the grave he had repeated such Scriptural texts as his memory afforded, without discriminating selection, and once, when his eye wandered to the old camp ground, there had been a perceptible break in his voice, a momentary spasm of pain, but the temptation to forget the salvation of souls in the fleeting illusions of the moment had been triumphantly overcome.

* * * * * *

In Christopher Burke we meet the typical fanatic, a fair representative of a class by no means confined to unpopular movements like Millerism, small-mindedness and intensity combined with the tendency to seize upon the part rather than the whole of a question; mistaking an attribute, even a petty one, for the subject itself; adopting the fragment with zealous devotion, blind to its relations; considering the fragment as an independent whole. So falsities are established on a narrow basis of truth, and schools of philosophy and theology are founded whose followers are the devotees of a fragment.

Christopher Burke lived to an old age; he died only yesterday, and never did his faith in the Speedy Coming grow cold. In every event of his life, to the closing day thereof, he saw a fulfilment of Scriptural prophecy. He caught eagerly at every item of political intelligence, as a confirmation of the inspired seership of Daniel and the Apocalypse, interpreting his newspaper by the same. He knew the exact topography of the battle-field of Armageddon, and just who was the king of the south and the king of the north; and who would have had a greater inter-

est in these latter-day explorations of the Great Pyramid than he? He fell asleep at the last, whispering, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," and on the headstone of his grave in the meadow at Barley Flats you may read—

"Waiting for the Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER XXV.

ON SHARON'S PLAIN.

TWO years after the events of the last chapter we find Marjory Burke spending her Christmas holidays at Dr. Wardell's, in New York, a tall, beautiful girl, whose studies were soon to be varied by a visit to England with her guardian, Elizabeth Culbertson. In the heiress of Deborah Hathaway, and a member of Mrs. Wardell's household, the madcap Marjory of Barley Flats, the fearless enthusiast of the Millerite camp ground, had undergone transformation. Nevertheless, Phil declared that she was the Marjory, and Phil and she had never grown apart; she a true child of the wide, breezy valley of her childhood, of its repose and beauty, its wide sweep of sky and meadow, full chorus of bird song, and miles of capricious cloud shadows.

They were hardly anticipating a merry Christ-

mas at Dr. Wardell's. They had hung up the evergreen wreaths, but the shadow of their disappointment in not hearing from Samuel Breckinridge was upon the hearth. He had been in Palestine with Letitia Barkenstone for more than a year, and the tenor of his last brief unsatisfactory letter, received late in the summer, had led them to believe he would keep Christmas with them, but not unless he could persuade his sister to relinquish her visionary scheme and return home.

"You are to bring Merit and America with you," Marjory wrote to Phil a few days before Christmas week. "We hope Mr. Breckinridge will be here, and it will give him such pleasure to see old Merit hobbling round, and 'mammy' must have the joy of making Kentucky egg-nog for so many fine folk. Then you will see Sir Edward. I know Cousin Vic is trying hard to interest you in Sir Edward. You should hear him tell me, with a babyish lisp, of the charming view from his old villa among orange groves of Sorrento, and why he suffers the gardens of his Italian retreat to remain desolate and neglected; those charming gardens he is sure I could enjoy, gardens full of darting liz-

zards, broken statues, and plashing fountains. He says Tasso's Leonora might have stood entranced in a certain balcony. Possibly she might; I should distrust the under-pinning. But I never laugh at him. I am in my ruby silk and pearl necklace, for Milord is coming to dine. When you meet him, Phil, don't fail to invite him to visit us at Barley Flats. He will accept, and we all will keep him company; and what a gay time that will be for the dear old house, what dissipation for John Wilson and the rest of the grim portraits, and how proud America will be in setting out the old china and silver!

"Mrs. Wardell is impatient to build her chapel on the old camp ground. That is her latest missionary ambition, not a bad one, seeing the new warehouses have changed the rural lane into a much travelled road, and so many working people live in the vicinity. Let her build it there, Phil. I like to think of a pretty stone church under those great trees, its bell sweetly pealing through the valley. Mrs. Wardell will have it dedicated on the anniversary of Aunt Prissy's death. It is to be Dan's first parish, of course, and Karl Saxsby is to design the

memorial window. I am to furnish the text for antique lettering over the chancel arch, and I believe you will agree with me, Phil, in choosing—

"'I will not leave you comfortless;
I will come to you.'"

* * * * * *

When Samuel Breckinridge arrived, as he did barely in time to take Marjory out to dinner that Christmas-day, he brought the first intelligence of Letitia Barkenstone's death.

"Poor Letitia!" sighed Dr. Wardell, lamentably failing, however, in losing the merry tone with which he had given the wanderer welcome, "poor Letitia!" and the twinkle in his infantile blue eyes would not be suppressed. "Well, Sammy, boy"—after an effort to say something most fitting, ending in a meditative tapping of his snuff-box before presenting it solemnly to each of the circle, "well, and how do you like farming according to the prophets?"

Sam told the story as they sat before their Christmas fire that night, a family party, including Phil, who, before it was done, found that the narrator had been transformed in his estimation into all that Marjory plainly believed

him to be. "Yes, it was hard to bury her there; but that was her request. She spoke of you several times, Marjory, child, at the last; she seemed to be trying to believe that you would yet take up her unfinished work. She gave me a rosary for you, beads of the wood of the old olives on Olivet, twelve of them exquisitely engraved, a story of the Passion. I never knew Letitia until I went to Palestine. There the sacred meaning of her life was partially revealed to me, and never again will I dare sit in judgment upon her eccentricity or seeming mistakes. Her death was a victory, a resurrection and ascension. But for me, she had impoverished herself utterly in her mission, which I knew to be an impracticable scheme from the first. As it was, she sacrificed everything she could. I cannot tell you the personal discomforts she endured; for the prophets, not human judgment, were her guide, and as there was no mention of 'the sickly season' of Judea in the prophecies, she ignored the sickly season in her calculations for entering upon her hard work. She sailed from Alexandria to Beyrut in a rice brig, without a cabin, lying on its vermin infested deck day after day in the burning sun,

surrounded by a crowd of filthy Orientals who plainly thought her insane. She nearly died on that voyage. I did not join her, you know, until she had been several months in Jerusalem; but she never lost her faith in the prophets, and that they were leading her step by step. She saw a succession of miracles in her progress to the Promised Land, and I had not the heart when I reached there, to show her that they were a succession of failures. That would have defeated me in protecting her. She would have cut loose from me at once. I controlled her by politic concessions to her arbitrary will, defending her as best I could against the horde of Arabs and designing Jews who made capital of her fanatical faith in their conversion, by running from sheik to consul and from consul to sheik in her behalf. On every side and from unlooked-for quarters troubles and persecutions came, and the chimerical undertaking was nearly at the point where she would have to choose between me and the prophets for a guide, when she was taken so suddenly and fatally ill. I am glad she died ignorant of the treachery of the Jew, her favorite convert, in whom she confided and of whom she had written glowing

accounts for the religious press in England and America. He was a sharp fellow, and but for my timely arrival and consular arbitration would have driven her from the premises in which she had invested so disastrously. But she believed in him to the end, saw in him a fulfilment of divine promise, and nothing I could say shook her faith in the least. I am glad she died in ignorance of the failure of her mission to Palestine; that I was enabled to spare her," and he paused, nervously twisting his moustache in his old fashion, "not from the sorrow of disappointment, she had never been disappointed. You could not disappoint her; she was not disappointed when the day went by, but turned to the prophets again for another unfulfilled promise, one in whose literal interpretation she would have trusted as firmly as ever before."

* * * * * *

On the plains of Sharon, some three miles from Joppa, may be found a lonely grave. The marble headstone bears this inscription in English:

Here lieth,
awaiting the resurrection of the just,
LETITIA BARKENSTONE,
of Philadelphia, United States of America,
Founder of an Agricultural Manual Labor School for the Children of Israel.
She died suddenly at Joppa, Dec. 6th, 184–, in the midst of her labors, a stranger in a strange land.

The time to favor Zion is come ;
He will set His hand a second time
To receive Israel, as it is written—
I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down.

The receding floods of fanaticism must inevitably leave wreck and devastation behind ; but who shall say of Letitia Barkenstone that her faith was for naught, nor hear from her desolate grave on the plains of Sharon a helping, saving voice?

THE END.

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